SPORTS / A30
Big Brown wins second jewel of Triple Crown

ACROSS / A17
Cops say last will key to solving Korean's murder

NEWS / A2
New NBN witness being scared off by gov't–Suplico

LEARNING / F1
4 schools rise in Payatas dump, thanks to Ateneo

ENTERTAINMENT / G4
Ellen, partner jumping at chance to marry

Yao Ming sets off earthquake of protest

SECURE—ON A DAY when Deng Xiaoping's widow gave her entire life savings to China's earthquake relief...it didn't pass unnoticed here that sparring icon Yao Ming was a little

ENG MING A23

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INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Monday, May 19, 2008 ★★ 13 sections / Vol. 23 / No. 164 P10 website: www.inquirer.net

RCBC manager is bank massacre's 10th victim

By Nito Catherine Calleja
Inquirer Southern Luzon,
DJ Yap and Nikko Dizon, *in Manila*

CALAMBA CITY—A BANK MANAGER WHO could have provided police with information on the robbers behind the massacre of nine people in the Calauan, Laguna, branch of Rizal Commercial Banking Corp. (RCBC)

RCBC A10

Jeepney, bus fares up

8 killed as 'Cosme' slams northern Luzon

By Inquirer Northern Luzon, Inquirer Central Luzon and Nikko Dizon *in Manila*

AT LEAST EIGHT PEOPLE were killed when Tropical Storm "Cosme" battered central and northern Luzon with center winds of 100 kilometers per hour at the weekend, ripping off roofs, hurling trees and iron sheets onto roads, and causing thousands of people to flee their homes in the midst of power blackouts.

Cosme veered its south on Zambales, Pangasinan, Benguet, La Union and the Ilocos provinces, damaging houses, felling power lines and cutting off electricity in several areas.

Power had yet to be restored in most of these provinces as of Sunday afternoon.

"The winds were strong. They were like ipo-ipo (tornadoes)," Zambales Gov. Amor Deloso told the Inquirer while inspecting the damage in his province. Eighty

8 KILLED A20

CURSE OF 'COSME' An electric post, toppled by Tropical Storm "Cosme" as it swept through the western coastline of northern Luzon on Saturday night, lies across the road in Dagupan City in Pangasinan, impeding traffic flow.

Drivers to charge new rates on May 21

By Riza T. Olchondra

IN A FURTHER BLOW to the country's already groaning consumers, public transport officials yesterday announced a provisional or temporary increase in the minimum fare of jeepneys and buses in Metro Manila, Central Luzon and Southern Tagalog.

The new rates will take effect on May 21.

The Land Transportation Franchising and Regulatory Board (LTFRB) said it approved the new rates to give drivers temporary relief from spiraling fuel prices.

The minimum jeepney fare in these areas will be raised to P8 from P7.50. For ordinary buses, the minimum fare will be increased to P9 from P8, while the minimum fare for air-conditioned buses will be raised to P11.50 from P10.

For provincial routes, ordinary buses may add P0.10 per kilometer while air-conditioned buses may charge P0.25 more per kilometer.

The new rates will be in force pending resolution of the fare hike petitions filed by various jeepney and bus groups.

LTFRB Chair Thompson Lin

JEEPNEY A10

Summit in Panglao may result in political truce

By Amando Doronila

THE ESCALATING CONFLICT between the administration of President Macapagal-Arroyo and the Lopez-controlled Meralco over high electricity rates scales the summit at a meeting in Bohol tomorrow.

ANALYSIS

According to deputy presidential spokesperson Anthony Golez, the President had agreed to meet with Manuel Lopez, chair and CEO of Meralco, and Jesus Francisco, the utility's president, only if the talks "will involve actual lowering [power] rates."

The meeting was set following a defiant interview by Lopez over the Lopez-controlled ABS-CBN, the country's largest radio-TV network. Lopez said that Winston Garcia, president and general manager of the giant

SUMMIT A12

GSIS chief peeved at GMA-Lopez meet

By Gil C. Cabacungan Jr.

HE IS WILLING TO PUT HIS head on the chopping block if that is the price of dismantling the Lopez family's control over Manila Electric Co. and lowering power rates for consumers.

Winston Garcia, president and general manager of the Government Service Insurance System (GSIS), made this statement yesterday in Malacañang backpedaled on its earlier statement that President Macapagal-Arroyo was meeting with Meralco head Manuel Lopez.

The meeting was supposed to take place tomorrow at the Panglao Island resort in Bohol where Ms Arroyo was to have a Cabinet meeting, but Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye declined to confirm the report. He said he had yet to see Ms Arroyo's schedule.

Bunye's deputy, Anthony Golez, said he was misquoted in media reports that Ms Arroyo would see Lopez.

Garcia was peeved that Lopez was reportedly seeking an audience with the President.

"I serve at the pleasure of the President, she can replace me at anytime if that is what the Lopezes want. But I must say she has never interfered in how I run GSIS even if this has generated negative publicity for her," Garcia said in an interview with the Inquirer.

He said the GSIS move to consolidate the government financial institutions' holdings in Meralco had forced the Lopez family to seek proxy votes for the coming stockholders' meeting in order to retain control of the country's biggest power utility.

"I wish him all the luck. That he will ask for my head is new exhibition of his arrogance and that he thinks his family's wealth and influence gives them the right to dictate to any government official even the President on what they want,"

GSIS CHIEF A22

Esperon appointed peace adviser

By Christine O. Avendaño

RETIRED GEN. HERMOGENES Esperon Jr. is transforming himself from warrior to peacemaker and is getting bricklbats.

A week after his retirement as chief of staff of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, Esperon was named President Macapagal-Arroyo's adviser on the peace process, outgoing Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye announced yesterday.

Esperon, 56, will replace Jesus Dureza, 60, a former congressman who has been chosen to replace Bunye as press secretary when Bunye goes to the Monetary Board.

Yesterday's announcement completes the Cabinet revamp, although Bunye said Ms Arroyo was expected to release appointments to "high-profile positions" involving development programs.

Speaking to the Inquirer from Japan where he and his family were visiting, Esperon said his new job came as he was set to see "peace memorials" in Hiroshima. He will also visit monuments to peace in his coming trip to Korea.

His trip to Japan, primarily to visit his daughter who is studying for a doctorate there, and Korea had been set even before Ms Arroyo extended to February his tenure as AFP chief of staff for another three months, according to Esperon.

Esperon said his new job fit in with his desire after his retirement to work in the Arroyo administration "in areas of peace, security and development."

"It's a position of high responsibility and it's a very important aspect in the life of the nation," he said. The challenge of the job was "in itself an inspiration," he added.

"I have very strong political

ESPERON A20

ESPERON Presidential adviser on peace process INQUIRER PHOTO

Inquirer visitor Rodolfo Mario Acebes, who is paralyzed, uses his new laptop computer. PHOTOS BY THELMA ANGELES-DALMACIO

Inquirer grants wish of Mindoro media man

By Madonna Virola
Inquirer Southern Luzon

SAN JOSE, OCCIDENTAL MINDORO—Rodolfo Mario Acebes, 58, is no stranger to the Inquirer. He has been reading the newspaper since the Marcos regime when the Inquirer was still tabloid-size.

"I chose the Inquirer because of the brains of the people who founded it, the fearless views of its opinion writers and Carlito Lalican's crossword puzzle," says Acebes, more popularly known as "Ka Dol" among radio listeners here.

Acebes, a columnist, radio commentator and book author, works from his bed, with the help of a typewriter and a telephone.

He met with a car accident 11 years ago that broke his spine and completely paralyzed him, forcing him to retire from the National Bureau of Investigation.

"After the accident, I went back to reading and writing to keep my sanity. I worked on a borrowed manual typewriter placed on top of three pillows on my right side," Acebes recounts.

Work would be easier, he says, if he had a laptop computer.

Last week, the Inquirer made his wish come true.

Acebes was one of 22 Inquirer letter-writers chosen to have their wishes granted during the newspaper's 22nd anniversary last December.

Apart from his involvement in local print media and radio since 1995, Acebes has been writing letters to the editor to the Inquirer.

He recalls his first letter to the editor titled "Dying with fans." It was published on April 17, 1994, which was also his birthday.

Most of his letters were published: "Presumption of guilt" (Aug. 9, 1994), "Merry Christmas" (Dec. 22, 1994), "Corpus crusade" (Aug. 30, 2001), "Why

INQUIRER A22

WEATHER FORECAST

Second FRONTPAGE

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SUPERLOTTO 6/49 14 22 26 32 38 43 P101,977,509.60

New NBN-ZTE witness wavering

Gov't may have learned his identity, scaring him, says Suplico

By Norman Bordadora

THERE IS A POSSIBILITY THE NEW WITNESS IN the controversial National Broadband Network (NBN) deal with China's ZTE Corp. will back out of the Senate inquiry, Iloilo Vice Gov. Rolex Suplico admitted yesterday.

Suplico told reporters the administration may have learned who the witness was from among those who joined President Macapagal-Arroyo's trip to Shanghai, China, and the ZTE headquarters in November 2006.

According to Suplico, suspicion-hunting persons had started making out the witness's neighborhood and asking his neighbors about him.

"Threatening witnesses has now become a modus operandi of this government every time it is undermined with the truth," Suplico said at the weekly Bulletin on Tinapayan press forum in Manila.

Suplico said the witness was seriously thinking about moving to another house.

Asked if there was a chance the witness would "back out" of the Senate inquiry into the $329-million NBN-ZTE deal, Suplico said, "That's possible."

"He is the best judge of his own security.... He has children like you and me," he said.

Suplico said the witness only wanted "to help in the search for the truth."

According to Suplico, there may have been two small busloads of officials and aides who accompanied Ms Arroyo, her husband Jose Miguel Arroyo and Speaker Jose de Venecia to ZTE's Shenzhen headquarters.

"If there were 50 officials and not-so-high officials and aides, a wouldn't-take 100 persons to background-check each of those who were on that trip," Suplico said.

Blowup of GMA

Suplico presented a blowup picture of top-level officials of the Chinese telecommunications firm who were with President Arroyo on the golf course in Shenzhen.

"It will be here for us if ZTE officials identified who these persons were," Suplico said.

Suplico, a lawyer, said that as far the witness didn't need to narrate an affidavit on what he knows about the lunch meeting and golf game between Ms Arroyo and the ZTE officials.

He said these parties—Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita, former Commission on Elections Chair Benjamin Abalos and Gov. de Venecia , the Speaker's wife, had confirmed the trip and Mr Arroyo's meeting with the ZTE officials.

"What he has so far said is that Mr Arroyo went to Shenzhen and met with ZTE officials on Nov. 2, 2006, and he has pictures to show [for it]," Suplico said.

Confirmation

"With the admissions of Secretary Ermita, Chairman Abalos and Speaker De Venecia, through his wife Gina, this fact has been confirmed," he said.

Asked if the witness had more evidence or pictures, Suplico said, "That is possible."

Suplico had a picture of Ms Arroyo riding a golf cart blown up and cropped the images of a man and a woman who were riding in a golf cart behind her.

The man in a yellow shirt was also in another picture standing beside Mr Venecia on the Shenzhen golf course while the woman in a pink shirt was taking Ms Arroyo's picture with the city's name in the background.

'Ransomic Rose'

The woman's shirt had the words "Ransomic Rose" on the front.

Suplico said he presumed the persons were top officials of ZTE.

Suplico said that as pastors to an alleged clandestine/spouse chief in the Philippines, the ZTE officials involved in the alleged-ly anomalous contract may be held liable under the country's antigraft law.

"Based on these pictures alone, there may be no liability. But taken against the backdrop of the [Homicidal] bird's cry of bribery, they may be liable under the Anti-Graft and Corrupt Practices Act," Suplico said.

Girls and Gloria in HK

In Occidental Mindoro, Rep. Amelita "Girlie" Villarosa, a staunch supporter of the President, talk about the Nov. 2 golf game and lunch meeting that President Arroyo had with ZTE officials in Shenzhen.

"I'm not saying anything, because it is Gloria, Iloilo is known for bolo, if Gloria is my co-godmother, it's up to you to read between the lines," Villarosa said in a phone interview late Saturday afternoon.

Villarosa, however, said that on Nov. 2 she went with President Arroyo to Dara Island in Hong Kong. "We rode on a small yacht," she said.

After lunch, Villarosa said they returned on mainland Hong Kong to pack up their things. *With a report from Madonna Virola, Inquirer Southern Luzon*

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2. Make sure that the mailing address you indicated in your PhilHealth claim documents is complete, correct and updated. This will help ensure the timely receipt of Benefit Payment Notices and Registry Receipt cards that we send to members.
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For more information, call the nearest Claims Department of PhilHealth in your locality

Lozada, Madriaga costing Senate, complains Enrile

By Gil Cabacungan Jr.

SEN. JUAN PONCE ENRILE wants the Senate to step in to survey arrangements for NBN-ZTE witnesses Rodolfo Lozada Jr. and Romeo Madriaga after the state officials likewise ranked up almost P2 million in food bills, travel expenses and overtime pay for bodyguards over the past three months.

"We can withdraw the Senate's control of Lozada because he has already complied his testimony. What more to hear him anyway? Why bother with him, he's finished. There is no more danger in his life, he is not afraid of ghosts," said Enrile in an interview over dzBB radio.

Funding allocation

Enrile said he was not aware the Senate had voted to mobilize providing security to Lozada and Madriaga and he assured to know who approved the funding allocation.

"I don't think the blue ribbon committee has funds for this kind of activities," Enrile said. "I never provided any witness with security. But if I did, I would have used my own funds from my security budget and I would have never charged it to the Senate."

Should Lozada and Madriaga require more security, Enrile said the Philippine National Police was the proper authority to provide them protection.

"The Senate is not a security agency, that is not our role," he said.

Enrile was reacting to reports the Senate had spent nearly P2 million on Lozada and Madriaga since February.

Sen. Panfilo Lacson, however, warned that pulling Senate personnel from its witnesses would send the wrong signal to would-be whistle-blowers.

Scheming manipulators

"It will protect the senators as a bunch of scheming manipulators out to promote nothing except their selfish interests," said Lacson. "We just cannot be their (whistle-blowers) food by themselves because it would discourage other witnesses from Senate investigations."

The Senate provides two to four bodyguards each to Lozada and Madriaga and pays for their food at the Senate lounge as well as Lozada's expenses when he travels around the country giving his side in the NBN-ZTE corruption controversy.

Lozada last appeared at the Senate on Feb. 6. Madriaga testified on Feb. 28 and provided details on the "bloody krissy plus plus" that allegedly included then Commission on Elections Chair Benjamin Abalos and the President's husband, Jose Miguel Arroyo, who were purportedly wrangling a commission from ZTE Corp. official Yu for the National Broadband Network contract that would have connected every government agency electronically nationwide.

Solgen files comment backing SC on Neri

By Lala B. Salvosria

THE SOLICITOR GENERAL HAS joined former Socioeconomic Planning Secretary Romulo Neri in defending the Supreme Court's decision that upheld Neri's invocation of executive privilege in a Senate hearing on the controversial $329-million National Broadband Network deal with China's ZTE Corp.

In a comment filed in response to the Senate's motion for reconsideration of the Supreme Court decision, the Office of the Solicitor General argued that despite the enumerated provisions on transparency and disclosure, the President's conversation with her advisers needed to be guarded to protect the independence of her decisions.

Final action

It also said the President should be judged on her final, executive action and not on the discussions that led to such actions.

According to the OSG, presidential communications are considered confidential and are presumptively privileged against disclosure. It cited earlier decisions of the high tribunal which stated the importance of keeping the Chief Executive's discussions private.

"Finally, that our Constitution is replete with provisions on transparency and disclosure does not diminish, much less abolish, the presumptively privileged character of presidential communications," the OSG said in the comment it filed Friday afternoon.

The high court had ruled that Neri, former director general of the National Economic and Development Authority, could not be compelled to answer three questions about his conversations with President Macapagal-Arroyo after first invoked executive privilege.

Non-publication of rules

The high court also ruled that Neri could not be forced to converse or attended by the Senate because of the non-publication by the latter of its rules, among other reasons.

The Senate, in its motion for reconsideration, contended that the constitutional provisions on the right to information, the policy of full public disclosure in transactions involving the public interest, the accountability of public officials in securing public funds were more important than the President's claim of privacy in her communications with Cabinet members. It also said the high court's ruling would put the country on the road to autocracy.

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Search for China quake survivors grows bleak

BEICHUAN, CHINA—THE search for survivors in the rubble of China's powerful earthquake grew bleak on Sunday, with rescuers in some areas no longer listening for trapped victims.

There were a few jubilant rescues even six days after the 7.9-magnitude to extend China. But the focus of efforts in the disaster zone appeared to shift to clearing corpses from shattered buildings in the number of confirmed dead rose to 32,477.

Another 228,308 people suffered injuries, the official Xinhua News Agency reported. The government has said it expects the final death toll will surpass 50,000.

People ran into the streets as a strong aftershock—measured by the US Geological Survey at magnitude-5.7—shook the area early Sunday for 45 seconds.

Few hopeful relatives were seen in Beichuan, which lies near the quake's epicenter, where several dozen corpses in blue body bags lay in a street. Soldiers regularly pulled more dead from the wreckage.

'Limbs broken off'

Wu Hui, a rescue team leader who came from neighboring Fujian province, said bodies were in the middle stages of decomposition and "many of the limbs are broken off."

"There are definitely many more here. Locals here said several thousands have been buried here," he said.

A "slightly bruised" man was pulled out alive from a collapsed hospital on Tuesday after being trapped for 130 hours, Xinhua reported. Experts say buried earthquake survivors can live a week or more, depending on factors including the temperature and whether they have water to drink.

A Malaysian rescue team in the town of Mianyang, further south, sifted slowly and methodically through the wreckage. However, the mission soon met tapping on the debris in hope that survivors would hear and respond as observers had done earlier. The Malaysians were trained using giant cushions to catch tired fathers.

Dozens of students were buried in new graves during a gloomy, hillside overlooking the rubble, the small mounds of dirty falling in block the pungent smell of decay wafting from the ground. Many graves were unmarked, although several had wooden markers with names scribbled on them.

'Why is life so bitter?'

Zhou Rencai, 36, said he raced to the town's middle school after the earthquake where relatives who arrived earlier had dug out the body of his 13-year-old daughter, Zhou Xiao, who was crushed on the first floor.

Zhou cradled his wife in his arms, holding her hand and stroking her back while the sobbed hysterically. "Oh God, oh God, why is life so bitter?" Liao Anju wailed. The couple's 9-year-old son survived.

The World Health Organization said conditions for homeless survivors were ripe for outbreaks of disease and called for quick action to supply clean water and proper hygiene facilities.

"Ensuring supply of food and safe drinking water and trying to ensure good sanitation are critical because these are basic transmission routes for communicable diseases," said Roos Haselhoff, WHO's representative in China.

Flood threats ease

Flood threats from dams blocked by landslides from the quake appeared to have eased after three waterways on the epicenter overflowed with no problems, Xinhua said. Country officials diverted released water as a precaution.

The quake damaged some water projects, such as reservoirs and hydroelectric stations, but no reservoirs had burst. Whether more possible flooding had new thousands of people fleeing the day before.

Student facilities joined by the quake were confirmed safe and troops were sent to calculate security there, the Peoples Mail Dan Mu Jian, deputy chief of operations for the military's General Staff Headquarters, told reporters in Beijing.

China has a research reactor, two nuclear fuel production sites and two atomic weapons sites in Sichuan province, all located 60-145 kilometers from the epicenter.

Remote villages

Chinese President Hu Jintao has urged rescue teams to reach remote villages battered by the earthquake where the level of damage remained unknown.

A group of about 15 people who surrounded an Associated Press reporter as a gasoline station in Mianyang city on Sunday appealing for help for their village, Shuibei.

"The government is doing nothing to help us," said one man, who identified himself only by his surname, "If I give you my complete name, the government would track me down."

Chen did not say how many people lived there. He handed over a note signed "by the displaced Shuibei," reading: "Please go to our village of Xiaobei to cover the situation. The government is doing nothing to help us get water or housing." AP

Magnitude revised to 8.0

BEIJING—THE CHINA SEISmological Bureau on Sunday revised upward the magnitude of the May 12 earthquake, which was left as far away as Bangkok, to 8.0 from 7.8 on the Richter scale, according to Xinhua news agency.

The US Geological Survey has put the magnitude of the tremor at 7.9, as has the Japan Meteorological Agency.

The magnitude was revised upward after Chinese specialists carried out detailed measurements of the earthquake, according to international practices, Xinhua reported.

The tremor in Kobe toured 'Kobe' killed the aftershocks. Eighty-six bodies number in China, where the Beijing Olympics are set to open on Aug. 8—6/66—at 8:08 p.m.

The tremor has been about with anniversary on the fact that the earthquake, China's most devastating in three decades, took place exactly 66 days before the Olympics' opening ceremony. AFP

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Check school buildings after China quake, gov't urged

By Jerry E. Esplanada

CITING THE DEVASTATION caused by China's recent killer earthquake, the head of the Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology (Phivolcs) has strongly urged the Department of Education and the Commission on Higher Education to conduct safety checks on all school buildings nationwide.

Renato Solidum Jr. (Phivolcs director), said an undisclosed number of school buildings here may be "vulnerable" in the event a strong quake hits the country—like the 7.9-magnitude tremor that hit parts of China last week.

Solidum also urged the two agencies to conduct earthquake and evacuation drills in all schools as soon as classes open next month.

Solidum said the massive "three things...building inspections and school drills—dapat sunlong ngtf, dapat walang ka-pagurong gawin ang mga ito (These should be conducted tirelessly)."

Both Education Secretary Jesli Lapus and acting Chief Chair Romulo Neri responded favorably.

When contacted, Lapus said he would "issue an order [to conduct inspections and drills] after our classes will resume and such guidelines."

In August 1990, the Office of the President issued Executive Order No. 137 declaring July National Disaster Consciousness Month.

Under the directive, the DepEd is instructed to "allocate time for the discussion of disaster preparedness, mitigation, prevention and control in classes; conduct earthquake drills and evacuation drills, and implement the 'Ligtas Eskuwela Safe Schools Project,' among other school activities.

For his part, Neri said the CHEd will discuss the issue at today's commission meeting.

China's Earthquake and Disaster Relief Headquarters reported Monday's quake had claimed more than 50,000 lives.

Some areas were flattened by the quakes, monstrous cubes drawn

Pinoy indie film in running for top prize at Cannes

CANNES—A HARD-LETTING Filipino film about a family living in a poor seismic disaster, "Jerichó," entered the running for Cannes gold yesterday in a boost to the country's struggling independent cinema sector.

The title of the edgy drama by Jerrold Mendoza refers to male prostitutes who ply their services among movie-going divers.

It is the first Filipino film with a shot at the top prize since the late Lino Brocka's "Maynila" in 1984.

Mendoza, whose "Foster Child" screened in the Directors' Fortnight section at Cannes last year, acknowledged that his latest picture offered a rough look at Filipino life and had only slim commercial prospects at home.

"Moviegoers will go to a cinema to fantasize," Mendoza said. "They don't want to see poverty, to see reality. They don't want to see what they see every day."

His "Jerichó" barely made it to the world's biggest cinema showcase. He shot the film in just 12 days and then spent a month in post-production that only wrapped this month. He sent a rough cut to the selection committee last last month.

Also representing the Philippines is Rayo Marino's "Now Showing," running in the Directors' Fortnight this year.

The pictures—almost five hours long—is about a young girl growing up in Manila, dealing with a grandmother who used to be an actress and an aunt who sells pirated DVDs.

The recognition that comes with the invitation to Cannes has raised hopes of a revival for the struggling Philippine movie industry—once one of the largest in the world but now hit by rampant piracy, high taxes and foreign imports.

The independent movie career in Europe is overlooked in the Philippines and both Mendoza and Marino say their works were financed largely by grants from foreign foundations. —AFP

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Manila Water will undertake service improvement projects which will cause temporary water supply interruption in the following portions of Marikina and Antipolo:

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BOC sale of goods back to importer slammed

AN AGENCY UNDER the Office the President has questioned the decision of the Bureau of Customs (BOC) to sell back to an ailing importer at a low price a textile shipment that had been forfeited to the government's favor.

"This may just be the tip of the iceberg at the Bureau of Customs," Nestor U. Santiago of the Office of the Presidential Adviser on Revenue Enhancement (Opaex) said in a press statement.

Higher taxes

The case involved a shipment consigned to Frank Industries and declared as containing 3,900 bags of low-price powder. Upon arrival in the country in 2005, however, the shipment was found to contain high-value polyethylene that required payment of higher customs duties and taxes.

Frank Enterprises denied ownership of the shipment, prompting the Bureau of Customs to order its seizure and forfeiture for misdeclaration and undervaluation—actions which were later upheld by the Tariff and Customs Code.

Protest

The Bureau, however, failed to auction off the shipment on Dec. 12, 2006, after the Association of Petrochemical Manufacturers of the Philippines protested that the floor price of P3.2 million was too low.

A year later, Frank Enterprises and Easterndale Chemical Asia Pacific in insurance negotiated to redeem the shipment. They were rebuffed by the customs collector but were later allowed by higher customs officials to get the cargo back upon payment of P1.7 million.

"This is ruined with anomaly," Jesus Aranza, president of the Federation of Philippine Industries, said when Opaex sought his comment on the release of the shipment.

"It was forfeited in favor of the government since way back in 2005, and isn't it wrong letting sold at a very low price and by way of redemption," Aranza pointed out.

Lack of gov't will cause of woes — tillers

LA TRINIDAD, BENGUET—CORDILLERA farmers have blamed the government's lack of political will to implement the food security provisions of the Agriculture and Fisheries Modernization Act (AFMA) for the worst food crisis the country may be facing in years.

The farmers said members of the agriculture committee of the House of Representatives on Friday they had yet to swap the benefits of Republic Act No. 8435, or AFMA, 10 years after it was enacted into law.

The agriculture committee, chaired by Palawan Rep. Abraham Khalil Mitra, called for a consultation with the farmers at Benguet State University here to look into complaints Abra has failed to disburse on its promise to uplift the farmers' lot.

Abosta party-list Rep. Robert Raymond Estrella said it was likely Congress would review the law following the complaints.

"Nine years from the approval of Afma, its major objectives have yet to be fully attained for the significant growth, sustainable economic and development of our agriculture sector," Estrella said in a resolution he filed in Congress.

Jose Andao Jr., Benguet Farmers Federation Inc. president, said one reason for the law's failure may be the Department of Agriculture's system of implementing programs that had been drawn "upstairs and not from the farmer's fields."

He also asked where the initial P20-billion appropriation and subsequent P17 billion allotted for Afma over the six years following the law's implementation went.

Pedro Jimmy Rolling, 104, Cordillera deputy director, said the agriculture department only implemented programs formulated after consultations with local governments and farmers.

Felix Dulnuan, provincial agriculture and fisheries council chair in Kalinga, said the government's failure to provide accessibility to markets, low cost fertilizer and seeds had caused farmers to lose their ability to sustain the high cost of production of rice and corn. *Delmar Garcia and Yolanda Salabe-Fuertes, Inquirer Northern Luzon*

Neglect of rice research hits poor most

LOS BAÑOS—THE BROWN PLANT hopper, an insect no bigger than a grain, is multiplying by the billions and churning through rice paddies in East Asia, threatening the diets of many poor people.

The damage to rice crops, covering at a time of scarcity and high prices, could have been prevented.

Researchers at the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) here say they know how to create rice varieties resistant to the insects but budget cuts have prevented them from doing so.

This is a stark example of the many problems now coming to light in the world's agricultural system. Experts say that during the food surpluses of recent decades, governments and development agencies lost focus on the importance of helping poor countries improve their agriculture.

The budgets of institutions that delivered the world from famine in the 1970s, including the rice institute, have stagnated or fallen, even as the problems they were trying to solve become bigger.

"People felt the world food crisis was solved, that food security was no longer an issue, and it really fell off the agenda," said Robert S. Zeigler, IRRI director general.

Most research programs have been shelved. A 2002 scientific study identified 14 genetic traits that could help rice plants survive the plant hopper, which sucks the juices out of young plants while infecting them with viruses. But the scientists have had no money to breed these traits into the world's most widely used rice varieties.

The fact is that the world's main repository of seeds, genes and other information about rice, the crop that feeds nearly half the world's people.

But nowadays at the institute, greenhouses have peeling paint and holes in the walls and screens. Half-empty offices. In the 1980s, the institute employed five entomologists, or insect experts, overseeing a staff of 300. Now it has one entomologist with a staff of eight.

Similar troubles plague other centers in Asia, Africa and Latin America that work on crop production to grow economies. Agricultural experts have complained about the flagging efforts for years and warned of the risks.

"Nobody was listening," said Thomas Lumpkin, director general of the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center in Mexico.

Now, a reckoning is at hand. AFP

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THE DAILY GOSPEL

Monday, May 19, 2008
7th Week in Ordinary Time
1st Reading: Jas 5:13-18
Gospel: Mk 9:14-29

When Jesus came down the mountain with three, James and John to the place where they had left the disciples, they saw many people around and some teachers of the Law arguing with them. When the people saw Jesus, they were astonished and ran to greet him.

He asked, "What are you arguing about with them?" A man answered him from the crowd, "Master, I brought my son to you for he has a dumb spirit. Whenever the spirit seizes him, it throws him down and he foams at the mouth, grinds his teeth and becomes stiff all over. I asked your disciples to cast the spirit out, but they could not."

Jesus replied, "You faithless people. How long must I be with you? How long must I put up with you? Bring him to me." And they brought the boy to him.

As soon as the spirit saw Jesus, it shook and convulsed the boy who fell on the ground and began rolling about, foaming at the mouth. Then Jesus asked the father, "How long has this been happening to him?" He replied, "From childhood. And it has often thrown him into the fire and into the water to destroy him. If you can do anything, have pity on us and help us."

Jesus said to him, "Why do you say 'If you can'? All things are possible for one who believes." Immediately the father of the boy cried out, "I do believe, but help me little faith there."

Jesus saw that the crowd was increasing rapidly so he ordered the evil spirit, "Dumb and deaf spirit, I command you: leave the boy and never enter him again." The evil spirit shouted and convulsed the boy and with a terrible death cry it left. The boy lay like a corpse and people said, "He is dead." But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him and the boy stood up.

After Jesus had gone indoors, his disciples asked him privately, "Why couldn't we drive out the spirit?" And he answered, "Only prayer can drive out this kind, nothing else."

Commentary

Like the small amount of yeast in the dough, a little bit of faith can have a powerful effect. The prayer of the man in the Gospel could sum it by our own: "I do believe, but help me little faith there."

We pray also whenever we are conscious of our inability to save ourselves. We are all powerless to achieve our own salvation in the main sense we do anything to help this one. But Jesus is just as present to us as He was to that desperate father and to the disciples. *Our souls cries for help will not go by, saved, for the Lord never leaves disappointed those who place their trust in Him.*

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WHAT'S THEIR GAME PLAN???

Poll automation hits snag in ARMM

By Dona Pazzibugan

THE AUTOMATION of the elections in the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao (ARMM) on Aug. 14 faces a major glitch as Congress has yet to approve a special exemption for poll officials who would otherwise be disqualified from running for reelection.

A joint congressional oversight committee for the Commission on Elections (Comelec) from government procurement rules just as the poll body could implement the automated election law of 2007.

The Congressional Oversight Committee on the Automated Electoral System, however, has not yet secured approval of the exemption from both the Senate and House of Representatives.

Senate Minority Leader Aquilino Pimentel Jr. reminded Sen. Richard Gordon, who chairs the oversight committee, that suspending the law on public bidding needed concurrence of the Senate president.

"These [bidding] requirements cannot be suspended by a mere approval or recommendation of the oversight committee. There should be a law to authorize the suspension," said Pimentel.

The senator, however, stressed he had no objection to the committee's decision to waive the bidding rules in this case.

He urged Gordon and committee vice chairman Mahid Ang. Ybrahim Lanto Ali Jr., to immediately file the resolution so it could be approved by both chambers as soon as possible.

Gordon chairs the Senate committee on constitutional amendments while Lanto heads the House committee on electoral reforms and reforms.

Last week, the Comelec announced it awarded contracts as two bidders to conduct the automated elections.

Smartmatic-Mid Technologies Inc. will install a direct recording electronic (DRE) system in Maguindanao while Avaya International Technologies Inc. will provide optical mark reader (OMR) technology for the other five ARMM provinces, namely, Lanao del Sur, Shariff Kabunsuan, Basilan, Jolo and Tawi-Tawi.

The OMR system uses touch-screen and touch-pad technology and is fully automated, according to Smartmatic-Mid. OMR technology, on the other hand, requires voters to fill out opaque ballot which is scanned by specially-designed machines.

PAF awaits delivery of 33 aircraft

By Tarra Quismundo

THE PHILIPPINE AIR FORCE EXPECTS TO receive 33 new and used combat aircraft for its flying school in Lipa City in the coming months, officials said last week.

This would nearly double the trainer fleet of the PAF's Air Education and Training Command (AETC).

Fifteen used T-41Ds from South Korea will start arriving in July and 18 brand-new SF-260 Marchetti will be here from Italy early next year, said AETC Information officer Maj. Gerardo Tamallo Jr.

The planes are expected to "increase the training output" of the Air Force's student pilots, Tamallo said. Currently, the 58 student pilots at the PAF Flying School take turns flying 18 trainer aircraft.

Air Force officials made the announcement during the PAF Flying School's alumni homecoming held at Fernando Air Base in Lipa on Saturday at which some 2,000 showed up, among them, pilots in current service, military retirees who had moved on to commercial airlines, retirees and their families.

Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro Jr., who was guest of honor at the homecoming, announced plans to acquire C-130 cargo planes "to support not only the troops on the ground but the various humanitarian commitments of the government," the AETC said.

The PAF's three C-130s are among the most utilized aircraft in the military's modest air fleet, shuttling in and from times, combat troops and disaster areas to resupply, transport, medical evacuation and humanitarian missions.

One of three planes has been readied to fly the Philippines' 33-member medical contingent to Burma (Myanmar). The government was still awaiting Burma's acceptance of the aid offer at press time.

Teddy Fernandez," the flying school's 50th annual reunion, was a day-long affair that treated alumni to aerial exhibitions, the fly-by of an S-211 jet and a skydiving exhibition.

Ramos cremation

RETIRING HARRY OF ARANGAS, PAMPANGA, who died last Saturday in Los Angeles, California, will be cremated on Tuesday, May 20, at the Forest Lawn in Covina, California.

Plans are being made for the ashes to be brought to Manila sometime in July for interment near the grave of his wife, Aduna Mercedes Ramos, at Loyola Memorial Park in Marikina City.

Ramos, a former executive assistant on the board of directors of the Government Service Insurance System, is survived by his daughter Grace, grandchildren Gladys and Ian, three sisters-in-law, nephews and nieces, and grandnephews and grandnieces.

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Pinoy seamen saved off Burma home soon

By Tarra Quismundo

THE DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN Affairs is arranging for the immediate repatriation of 19 Filipino seafarers rescued off Burma (Myanmar) who experienced the wrath of deadly Cyclone Nargis almost three weeks ago, DFA officials said over the weekend.

Citing the Philippine Embassy in Bangkok (Yangon), the DFA said in a statement the mariners who were stranded for a week after their vessel ran aground on an isolated island near Dubale, Burma, on May 3 would be home soon.

Filipino officials in Rangoon, however, have yet to say when the seamen would be flown home. Their shipping agency will pay for the group's plane fare to Manila, the DFA said.

The rescued seafarers were Gilberto Mesia, Noel Tagan, Basilio de Lucero Jr., Mark Anthony Aguilar, Aedino Hermachuela, Andrei Villalon, Alexander Mendoza, Wilmar Aseneta, Reynaldo Gomez Jr., Lauro Torres, Arnaldo Monteclaro Jr., Alberto Campay Jr., Manuel Victor Arellano Jr., Filomeno Tumaliang Jerok Marfa, Ghanim Glenn Barete Jr., Tony Salac, Romeo Badar and Elvis Escanlar.

The group is currently in Rangoon being helped with food, shelter and clothing by their manning agency, the DFA said.

For seafarers, were aboard their cargo vessel which was passing through Burmese waters when the cyclone ripped through the country on May 2. They told Philippine authorities in Rangoon the ship "was buffeted by very strong winds and waves."

"The vessel obviously duly said, the ship was aground on the rocky formation. [crew Pedrosa] and stayed there," said the DFA.

The seamen were rescued by a Burmese Navy vessel on May 10 and brought to Rangoon.

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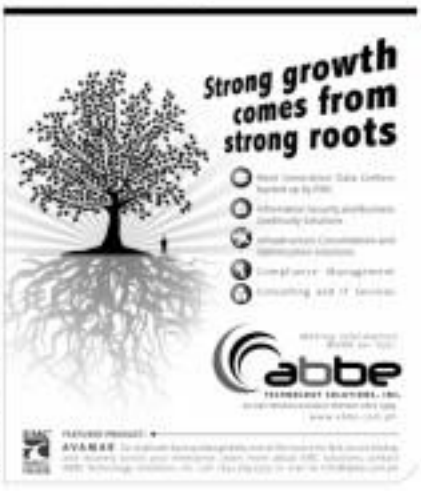

PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER

OPINION

A diminished man

WITH THE APPOINTMENT OF JESUS DUREZA, the presidential adviser on the peace process, to the cabinet post tentatively cast a few have asked the inevitable question. Will Dureza finally bring peace to Mindanao's intractable, sometimes fractious relations with the media?

The short answer is No, probably not. The long answer depends on an altogether more important question: Will he sacrifice his considerable reputation

EDITORIAL

or the shirt of procedural legitimacy?

It is our duty to ask, because of the exact same sacrifice made by his predecessor, Press Secretary and Presidential Spokesman Ignacio Bunye. In the continuing Cabinet riposte, Bunye has been given the privilege of a graceful (and well-compensated) exit, as the newest member of the Bangko Sentral's Monetary Board. But even to those among the middle forces and the media who remember Bunye from the days of the freedom struggle, even to those who still see him as the sterne affable fellow, genial and smart, there is no disputing his service as President Macapagal-Arroyo's resident intermediator has made him a diminished man.

The incredible shrinking Testing Bunye: Is this a sign of the fate lying in wait for Jess Dureza?

Bunye has appeared on television and been published in the paper's comedian views (he even has a column available online, at the Office of the Press Secretary website). But out of all that homage and film stock, only image will define him for all time: that time, three years ago (next month, when he appeared before the cacaiase with two compact discs in hand, just as the "Hello, Garci" scandal was breaking. He told a rapt nation that he had evidence that the President's alleged wiretapped conversations with election commissioner Virgilio Garcillano (the CD in one hand) were a fabrication, because the conversation was actually between the President and a certain political aide named "Garry" (the CD in the other hand).

This bold attempt to immediately contain a political crisis immediately backfired, because it turned out that the object of the wiretaps was not the President, after all, but Garcillano. In other words, and as the recordings and transcripts circulated or published online immediately made clear, President Arroyo's supposed conversation with "Garry" could not have been part of the Garci tapes.

The flaw in the plan to cover up the crisis was that it was based on a faulty reading of the problem (Palace operatives thought it was the President's phone which had been tagged). The faulty reading of the problem, however, proved that there was in fact a cover-up. A Palace official—the President's spokesman, no less—had been caught with both hands inside the CD jar.

Much later, under questioning in Congress, Bunye alleged that the package of CDs had only come into his possession, sub rosa. He said he didn't even know where the package came from. The brainless excuse, from one of the wise-careful lawyers, led many to conclude that Bunye, at the very least, was part of a cover-up about a cover-up. If Bunye really did not know the provenance of the two CDs, why did he present them to the media? As his old and new friends from the banking industry might say, it doesn't compute.

Loyalty is a virtue; there is no gainsaying that. But public officials are expected to be loyal to duty and country above all. Bunye's I-have-two-CDs epiphany showed that he placed loyalty to the President above public interests. The hissing sound we've heard from the Malacañang briefing room since then—that's the sound of a once formidable lawyer-politician, deflating.

The fault, it is true, lies not in his stars, but in himself, that he is an underling. It is hard to argue with Shakespeare's political insight. But it is also true that the President whom Bunye served demanded nothing less than a self-immolation from him (and from other officials, many of them the proverbial stars guy). This is the same President that Bunye will now serve in closer quarters. Will he resist his own muse, as well as, too, next yesterday through his ashes on the already overheated altar of sacrifice?

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Meralco: 'Because the ERC approved it!'

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

RUNG, SPARED IN THE JOINT INVESTIGation of Meralco at the Energy Regulatory Commission (ERC). By going on record as having sounded the bell on the Meralco issue, the chief of the ERC, former Rep. Rodolfo Albano, escaped getting his head handed to him by Congressmen. And yet the ERC is the chief culprit in the abuses of Meralco—and the government for shoving it up to us—that have resulted in the unbelievable electricity rates. Had the ERC been doing its job, those abuses could not have happened. That was what the ERC was created for—to regulate (in the power industry).

Now that the Meralco executives had one reason to answer questions on why they did this or that abuse: "It was approved by the ERC." The ERC stands in legal relief as Meralco's spokesman.

Albano has many good reasons for keeping away from the investigation. He runs the gamut of explanation and would things. I predict he will stay grounded if we and the hell this down mad dance. Albano is tremendous.

Why did Meralco include in its "operations expenses" its income tax payments? "Because the ERC approved it. It is part of operations."

Why did Meralco include in its "operations expenses" its income tax payments? "Because the ERC approved it. It is part of operations."

Why did Meralco charge consumers for electricity that did not use but was stolen by fellow consumers? "Because it is legal. The ERC approved it. It is called 'system loss'."

Meralco wants its consumers to pay its P26 billion debt to National Power Corp. It is clearly illegal, immoral and unethical, but if the ERC approves it, Meralco will add it to your electric bill. It is unlicensed and unethical, but by approving it, the ERC will make it legal. They will all end laughing all the way to the bank.

The ERC approved it. "It was approved by the ERC," sir, sir, Meralco cannot do anything wrong. All they did was legal. The ERC approved them.

Why did ERC approve them although it is obvious that they are wrong?

Because of many murky reasons. Remember the ERC chief is acting up to me months.

That is why politicians should never be appointed to regulatory bodies. Most of them could scatter to the idea of former Senate President Jose Laurel's politician per excellence, when he asked: "What's wrong with providing for one's future? What are you buying for?"

Look to this absurd situation: If I am not mistaken, the salaries of the ERC and the Water Regulatory Board (WRB) are taken from what the franchise holders pay to these two agencies that regulate the power and water utilities, respectively. If the power companies and the water concessionaires delay payment, the regulators get no salaries. The regulators get their pay from the companies they regulate! Does anyone expect them to strictly regulate the companies where their pay comes from?

The same is true with the Laguna Lake Development Authority (LLDA).

The agency that regulates the fisheries in Laguna de Bay gets its pay from the fines and fees that the fishpen operators pay. The LLDA first of all has the fishpens to be put up (for which local government units collect fees) until the fine is assessed. Then it cracks down on the violators as it can collect the fines. After a while, the operators come back and the LLDA looks the other way. Whether or not violations continue, it cracks down on them again and collects the fines. It is a vicious, and profitable, cycle.

Because I blame their, however, if there are no violators, others will then pay some fines? It does not pay to be neutral. If sinners and innocents are willing to pay, there's no reason not to.

But even assuming that what Meralco did was legal, it is not moral and ethical to make the already high power people pay for electricity they did not use and/or had stolen from others. Is it moral for Meralco to make its subscribers pay an additional P866 million a year for electricity they did not use but what Meralco failed to meter? Is it moral for Meralco to make honest subscribers pay for what are clearly electricity thieves: rich and rich elite (power thieves come with any kind of the wealthy citizens but those from the exclusive enclaves of the subs)? Is it moral for Meralco to make its customers pay for its P26 billion debt to others?

(And by the way, Meralco has already been ordered by the courts to refund the deposits paid by subscribers for electric meters, why has it not done so until now? And also by the way, how many more years will it be paying for the second highest in Asia. It is the highest when we factor in the low rate many have a much higher standard of living than in the Philippines.)

Is it moral for Meralco to add on many other questionable charges to the monthly bill? Look at your electric bill: there are about a dozen charges added to the cost of the electricity you consumed. These add-ons double your electric bill. Is it moral for Meralco to charge all its expenses and losses to its customers or only to those people all the profits?

It is not. But Meralco has no qualms about doing so because now the ERC approves it.

We, ERC is one of Rodolfo Albano's, how many sins have been committed in your name?

* * *

TODAY'S ART:

Boy drops his homework, to the police:

Pi. What is the difference between SPIRITUAL and SPIRITUAL?

Police: Both are wrong, don't send newspaper boys, use UNDERSTAND. When you have to solve commentators, you become SEEING-SOLVED.

Both of the same thing CONFUSED and CONFUSED!

Boy: Thank you, police, now my son, I am CONFUSED of that. Say neighbor Edna, who is the son of my barangay and your playmate, is also my son. But that is CONFIDENTIAL.

Cruz's cross

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

THE ONE THING TO REALLY HAVE PASTOR to see was Archbishop Oscar Cruz not passing bail after he was served an arrest warrant. He had threatened it earlier, saying he wasn't alarmed that the Justice Department had served the same spiritual Imelda. We didn't mind paying no jail since government wanted for giving him free board and lodging. But a bail deal is those days when in came a hot one.

That would have been a sight to see, an archbishop brought in the local precinct and finger-printed like a common criminal. The last time something like that happened, the country erupted in rage—for the wrong reasons. That was when Erap was served his arrest warrant and made to "play the game," to use a local idiom, in the booster precincts. The sight of it so incensed his followers that they flocked to Edsa, producing a bigger Showbiz than that found in Edsa Dos I.

Erap of course was guilty of the charges against him, hence the wrong reasons for the public hoi-hoi over it. In fact, Cruz is not just innocent of the charges against him, the charges are completely specious. Experts say there's the fact that Cruz took from the mind of Raul Gonzalez the concept of "the mind of Raul Gonzalez" being even more specious. Can you imagine how the public would have reacted to the sight of Archbishop Cruz being made to play Chopin on a whim of Gonzalez? And on his breast?

But Cruz was guilty of one bad, old crime in the arrest way parts—P10,000. Cruz would take him on bail he put off cheap, he was evidently worth more than a bail. The levity did not make up for lost opportunity. It would have been a great chance to play Broken and create a minor version of a "murder in the cathedral." Perhaps it or his hosts was hacked to death by Bunye II's aides after those aides acted completely blind. It or their King's equivalent, "Will no one rid me of this pest?" fail to not exactly the equivalent of a murder in the cathedral, but it will do. The crimes of the innocent must have dominated the principle. Rumor has, however, as opposed to corrupt sums, do not have P10,000 to yield to nuisance appearances.

The charge against Cruz in question, for him, is even more than it came from the mind of Raul Gonzalez. It came from an aide to Cruz some very bank in 2004 alleging that female employees of Pagcor served as "patients (JOG)" in a birthday bash thrown by Malacañang for the First Gentleman. The women filed that against Cruz—Cruz insists Pagcor put them up to it—saying they in fact volunteered as aids, entice for the affair. The Manila prosecutor's office dismissed the complaint, as after as his right mind wouldn't. Well, the operative phrase is "who in his right mind." Because if not years later Gonzalez decided to endorse it. The Justice Department so filed the case against Cruz and four seventh times a Manila RTC ordered his arrest.

Now, rebellion. But Pagcor employees served as "patients (JOG)" is naturally dutiful sick, entice a number of interpretations. Even the innocent part is inherently risky one thing to Cha-cha for. I'm glad they had the good sense to resist the Gon because it has something to do with Cruz's attention to something that he escaped it all the time. Which it from painting that the Pagcor employees volunteered their services at the event—which takes many forms, including serving as floor for the First Gentleman as we believed by anyone they will profess their affection in this way—what in God's name were they doing in a birthday bash thrown by Archbishop Oscar Cruz?

Let me begin two years after the event, always filed libel charges against anyone from 50 journalists on the grounds that he wasn't a public official who could be his prime for criticism, he was a private individual. Pagcor is a government office and Pagcor employees are government properly however found that sounds. What were they doing using government resources and personnel to stoke a private individual happy, such as he can even know that story? Even James Bond, who is covered by the British intelligence, accounts for his use of government property (which includes his name, Bond. There and that you have an open admission that the First Gentleman is not in fact a private individual but was presumed by this government to have the real dimensions of a person.

Again apart from that, the fundamental criterion of libel in any two-bit lawyer knows, is bad faith. To prove libel, you have to prove malice. That is the last thing you can pin on Cruz. If Cruz's enforcer had often hardly reside against corruption in government has anything near one it, it is good faith. Hell, it has herniated me from all over it.

I don't particularly mind that bishops face prosecution and jail for wrongdoing. In fact, I demand it. The church is not to extend entitlement to corruption. Even the Penal Code. Priests do not acquire special immunity by becoming friars. Come on, Oscar. God's what if God's and to Caesar what is Caesar's, one sees hell the awful, one sees jail the offender. To extend it is bad. But the Vatican and its various theocracy have seen billions to shield priests accused of sexual abuse from earthly retribution. And I would have been prosecuted for clergy, but only the damnable guilty and not the arbitrary innocent. Only the cost apt archbishops and not archbishop Cruz.

Of course the libel case against Cruz is preposterous. But I doubt government will pursue it. The church is not powerful in the Hood. Bias in the execution. By no stretch of the imagination can this government afford to jail an archbishop whose only crime is fighting graft and corruption. Not even if Cruz had refused to post bail.

A pity that he still has forgiveness of spirit. the good archbishop locked the board of transgression to use it.

The 'J' in Jelac

SOUNDING BOARD

Fr. Joaquin G. Bernas, S.J.

JELAC, OF COURSE, IS THE JUDICIAL AND BAR COUNCIL. Judiciary, Legislature and Executive advisory and Coordinative Council. No sooner did it begin to function than concerns are being expressed about its wisdom if not about its constitutionality. The concern is mixed from the part to function of the judiciary to the Council. Some have expressed the fear that it can compromise the independence of the judiciary in the regime of separation of powers. Should it really be a matter of serious concern at all?

Any discussion of the subject must begin with the nature of judicial power. Judicial power, as our Constitution puts it, "includes the duty of the courts of justice to settle actual controversies involving rights which are legally demandable and enforceable." It is also the power of any tribunal not from but here is given abuse of discretion amounting to lack or excess of jurisdiction on the part of any branch or instrumentality of the Government."

Beyond this, the judiciary may not usurp legislative, nor may it be governed.

The framers of the Constitution called the "least dangerous branch" because it has neither money which the legislature controls, nor arms, which the executive wields. But it has the power of law which the Constitution guards by separating the judiciary's operation from Congress and Executive. It is this delicate separation that is causing concern.

Under our Constitution the judiciary in politics it may not give advisory opinions whether to the President or to Congress. As judiciary, its language must have the force of law which must be obeyed. Advisory opinions do not command obedience. Giving advisory opinions can destroy the judiciary.

It is true that individual justices sometimes give advisory opinions. But they do it on their own, and improperly. Neither they themselves nor the courts are bound by such opinions.

In the 1987 Constitution there is also a provision which says that the "Members of the Supreme Court and of other courts established by law shall not be designated to any agency performing quasi-judicial or administrative functions."

In order that the needs of the judiciary can be effectively attended to by those who have the obligation to do so, the Constitution also says: "The Supreme Court shall, within thirty days from the opening of each regular session of the Congress, submit to the President and the Congress an annual report on the operations and activities of the Judiciary." It is through this report that the President and Congress are made aware of the needs of the judicial system.

Against this background, what can be said about the Judiciary-Legislative and Executive Advisory and Coordinative Council? Let us begin with its composition and purpose.

Based on the Memorandum of Agreement creating the Jelac, it shall be composed of nine members, with the President as the Chair, the Vice-President, the Senate President, the House Speaker, the Chief Justice, a Cabinet Secretary, a Senator, a House Member and one more justice.

As to function, it "shall serve as the forum and venue for the representatives of the three branches of government to undertake measures on matters affecting the judiciary for the sake of law, to identify the problems and issues, to formulate solutions and to implement the same."

As worded, the functions seem to me to be closer to legislative and executive than to anything else. One drawback is unnecessarily led to wonder why the Chief Justice and a Justice should be there. Pal Sen. Francis Pangilinan, whose brainchild the Jelac is, is quick to explain that this is not the case at all. What is it then?

Pangilinan is quoted as saying, "Firstly, the creation of the Jelac is not by law but by a memorandum of agreement. Hence, at any given time any party to the agreement can give notice to the other parties if it desires to withdraw its participation from the council. The heads of the SC, therefore, are not tied to the Jelac should it deem it necessary to disengage because of legal or political influences."

Since government authority comes only from law and since Jelac, as Pangilinan admits, is not a creature of law, it has no legal authority. Why then should the Chief Justice lend the stature of his office to a body that has no legal authority?

Pangilinan adds that the Jelac was meant "to be of help to the courts and that "If it needs to first track the needs, needed reforms in the administration of justice by way of budgetary and other forms of support."

There you have it: first-tracking the "needs needed reforms through budgetary and other forms of support" is a legislative and executive function.

The noble goal of Jelac, Pangilinan says, is "to address serious problems that have plagued the judiciary and the administration of justice for decades. This requires new approaches, new methods and new solutions."

In so far as this is an admission that Congress and Executive have not done their job, I agree. But the only tasks of the Court should be to apprise the President and Congress of the needs of the judiciary through the annual report required by Article VIII, Section 16 of the Constitution.

Besides, the Jelac is not the only body that has been created to help the judiciary. Others are the Judicial and Bar Council, the Philippine Judicial Academy, the Supreme Court Committee on Revision of Rules of Court, the Committee on Legal Education and Bar Matters, the Code Commission, the Law Revision Committee, the Committee on Decongestion, the Committee on Family Courts and Child Welfare, the Committee on Anti-Graft and Corruption, the Committee on Public Information, the Committee on Security and Emergency Preparedness, the Committee on Ethics and Ethical Standards, the Committee on Gender Sensitivity, the Committee on Court Management, the Committee on Mediation, the Committee on Revision of the Revised Penal Code, the Committee on Revision of the Civil Code, the Committee on Revision of Laws relative to Family Relations, the Committee on Revision of the Rules of Evidence, the Committee on Revision of the Rules of Procedure for Small Claims Cases, the Committee on Revision of the Rules of Procedure for Environmental Cases, the Committee on Revision of the Rules of Procedure for Intra-Corporate Controversies, the Committee on Revision of the Rules of Procedure for Special Proceedings, the Committee on Revision of the Rules of Procedure for Labor Cases, the Committee on Revision of the Rules of Procedure for Family Courts, the Committee on Revision of the Rules of Procedure for Cases Involving Violence Against Women and Their Children, the Committee on Revision of the Rules of Procedure for Cases Involving Minors in Conflict with the Law, the Committee on Revision of the Rules of Procedure for Cases Involving Rehabilitation, the Committee on Revision of the Rules of Procedure for Cases Involving Juveniles in Conflict with the Law

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Asean's deep shame

LETTERS

THE RESPONSIBLE GENERALE heading the Burma (Myanmar) junta have been dragging their feet about allowing in hitherto no-go workers (probably because they are terrified of possible consequences beyond their control). It's obvious these repressive bunglers prefer to let the countless survivors of the cyclone die rather than accept aid from abroad. Reports about their reluctance to grant visas to those in the outside world who are ready to send in relief supplies and personnel are to be expected.

If the Americans were allowed to use their helicopters to deliver relief goods, as they did successfully in Aceh in Indonesia in the tsunami-hit Asian hotspots, millions of lives would be saved. There perhaps we could hope that the long-suffering Burmese people would be able to regain their strength to [illegible] to [illegible] its [illegible] get rid of their brutal rulers who are certainly the shame of Asia.

What other proof do the members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations now need to realize that their past preoccupations over ensuring the junta has only continued to inflict pain and deprivation among the ordinary Burmese? Now is the time for Manila to withdraw its recent benighted gesture. Out their stupidity is unacceptable in today's globalized world.

—ISABELLE DOOLEY,
London, N.1, Hong Kong

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Uratex 40 YEARS

'Lambingan' at Naia Centennial Airport

WHEN I ARRIVED IN THE PHILIPPINES from a trip to Aquaclad April 7, I went through a very annoying experience at the Centennial Airport. It happened during the final security check point to my connecting flight from Manila to Davao.

I was toting my hand-carried luggage and a Duty Free Philippines shopping bag filled with chocolates. As I entered the last X-ray machine, the woman behind it told me that my Duty Free bag would have to be physically inspected by another officer and that I should go over to the side. Thinking it odd for her to ask me to do that since a bag of chocolates would be readily identifiable in the rainsel eye of an X-ray operator. Though surprised, I dutifully submitted my packages for physical inspection.

A young female officer approached me and asked me where I came from. Then she went through the chocolate-filled bag, looked up to me and very casually said, "Magkambing ang aka sa'yo sir." I knew right away that she meant to ask for some of those chocolates. And that really annoyed me. I gave her some of the chocolates. I told her not to [illegible] that what she was doing was not right and that she should not be doing it. I folded her name and I took a picture of her to put a face to the name.

I could afford to give her a pack or two of the chocolates. But doing that would merely encourage her to continue and, maybe, go for more the next time—a measly bag of chocolates now, bottles of perfume next, electronics gadgets later, and so on. I pity the thousands of overseas Filipino workers coming home after several years of toiling in a foreign land, bringing home pasalubong for their family with money earned through sweat and tears, only to be subjected to this kind of harassment from government agents.

We cannot allow this practice to continue and to thrive if all is normal. We give in and sometimes even participate in this evil act, and the crooks, like vultures, feed on our apathy, emboldened to go for bigger targets with their corrupt deals. By being apathetic, we are guilty of perpetuating corruption. And we often wonder why the Philippines has been left behind.

—BERNARD S. CHEW, MD, FPCEP(CC),
Heart Institute,
Davao Doctors Hospital,
Quirino Avenue,
Davao City 8000

Rectal surgery scandal a sexism-classism act

WE ARE COMPLETELY APPALLED AND DISgusted in front of the "rectal surgery scandal" in Cebu. Instead of getting sympathy from his doctors and the hospital, Gabriela Cebu-Visayas Women's Medical Center (VSMMC), the patient was made an object of ridicule, when his operation was documented and subsequently disseminated through cellphones and the Internet.

What his partner and the surgical team did to him was both insensitive and distasteful. Without condemnation, it was a souvenir and clear manifestation of "sexism-classism," of the prevailing view that gays who are poor are less of a human being. The same sexist and classist view continues to victimize women who experience discrimination or violence such as rape, battering and sexual harassment.

Gabriela Cebu supports the struggle of gays to be recognized as human beings protected by human rights and to equal justice in nation-building. We urge the VSMMC administrators as well as the Philippine Medical Society to punish those responsible for the brutality act.

—LOLITA BARELLANO,
SECRETARY GENERAL,
Gabriela Cebu, gabriela_cebu@yahoo.com

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Writers of letters to the editor are requested to include their complete address and telephone or pager number or e-mail address for verification purposes. The Inquirer will not publish any letter unless such information is supplied.

Across the NATION

Last will 'key' to solving Korean's slay

By Marlon Alexander Luistro
Inquirer Southern Luzon

BATANGAS CITY—A SOUTH KOREAN WOMAN millionaire, who was found dead with two bullet wounds in the head, could have been killed because of a dispute over inheritance, police said.

The body of Young Ae-park, 67, a real estate investor, was found on a grassy lot in Barangay Sico Marizona, Ibaa Parood, on April 13.

Says. Pepito Bagan, investigator of the Batangas Criminal Investigation and Detection Group, said his group was coordinating with the South Korean Embassy to get at least a photocopy of Young's last will, which might help police solve the murder.

Quoting the victim's two brothers, Eunwoo and Eun Sung, Bagan said Young had assets of P25 million in South Korea.

"[They] have already made their statements that the victim had been quarreling with her daughter Lhoogong Won-seol for the past 15 years and money was always the reason," said Bagan, a member of the Special Investigation Task Group "Park, which was formed by the Philippine National Police to solve the case.

He said their statements only confirmed that the relationship between Young and her daughter "had not been cordial."

"She suspect that the victim was killed so that [the daughter] would already get her [share of] inheritance," Bagan said in an interview on Wednesday.

Assigning was among the suspects of the police.

Police identified Young's body after they recovered from the victim wrote a brown paper bag with P51,700 and a Korean Air claim stub under her name.

They said Young went to Manila with Assigning on March 30 to learn English in preparation for migration to the United States.

Batangas police chief Senior Supt. David Quinto said he had ruled out robbery as the motive for the killing since Young's belongings were intact when she was found.

Quinto said her husband, whom he refused to identify, was among the suspects. Young and her husband had separated by bed estranged for 30 years.

Inconsistencies

No murder charges have yet been filed against the suspects, Bagan said.

Police said they found inconsistencies in the statements made by the victim's daughter.

Quinto said investigators had difficulty pursuing the case because Assigning had left for South Korea.

They were asking help from the South Korean Embassy to bring her back to the Philippines for "further questioning," Bagan said.

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YouTube victim wants DOH out of probe

By Jhunnex Napallacan
Inquirer Visayas

CEBU CITY—THE PATIENT IN the stroke surgery scandal at a government hospital here is not fighting for the reinstatement of the Department of Health to the administration investigation of the doctors and nurses involved in his surgery.

He is also seeking protection of his identity after some local radio and radio stations identified him.

His lawyer, Geiller Cortes, said his client preferred that the investigation be done solely by the Visayas Ombudsman, as he believed the DOH probe was biased for the accused medical practitioners since only six of 11 chosen persons present during the surgery were having administrative charges.

The surgery at the Vicente Sotto Memorial Medical Center on Jan. 3 to remove a tumor of epinyon pellitus from the patient's cerebrum because a medical alum a video of the procedure showing the doctors and nurses laughing, dancing and making fun of the patient was uploaded on YouTube.

Cortes said he would ask the Ombudsman today to order the DOH to Caridad Vinzons to turn over to the complaint body the documents related to the administrative investigation.

He added that since his client had lodged a complaint before the Ombudsman against the doctors and nurses, the Ombudsman could also direct media organizations to stop using his client's real name.

Health Undersecretary Alexander Padilla earlier said the department was willing to give way to the Ombudsman in the investigation but that it would continue with its exercise of the Ombudsman did not rule on the matter.

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NOTICE OF 22-HOUR WATER SERVICE INTERRUPTION IN PARTS OF PARAÑAQUE, LAS PIÑAS AND CAVITE

SOME areas in Parañaque, Las Piñas and Cavite will have no water for 22 hours, from 12:30 a.m. until 10:30 p.m. on Wednesday, May 21, 2008.

The water service interruption is due to the interconnection of 400-mm pipelines, as well as the insertion of a 450-mm butterfly valve, to the existing 450-mm mainline along Quirino Avenue near corner Kabihasnan, Parañaque City.

The areas that will have no water for 22 hours are the following: Palanyag Road; J. De Leon; Gatchalian 1; R. Medina; Aurenina; Espiritu; Villanueva; Multinational; Green Court; Palanyag/ Canaynay; Bernabe; Salvador Estate; Claramen; Villa Lourdes; Valley 2, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15; Fortunata Village; Dela Cruz Compound; Cruz Compound; Topland; BMI LPHU Vinta Mall; San Dionisio; La Huerta; Dongalo; Sto. Niño; and Tambo, Parañaque.

Meanwhile, areas that will have low pressure to no water are Las Piñas City, and Bacoor, Kawit and Noveleta in Cavite.

These efforts are in line with the objective of Maynilad's new owners, DMCI and Metro Pacific, to upgrade the water system and improve service throughout the West Zone.

We would like to apologize for any inconvenience the water service interruption may cause.

For more information, customers may call Maynilad Water Hotline 1626.

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Ex-Quezon mayor seeks new illegal logging probe

By Jocelyn R. Uy

A FORMER MAYOR AND AN ADministrator of General Nakar town in Quezon, who are facing 223 counts of usurpation of authority in connection with illegal logging operations, have asked the Sandiganbayan for a reinvestigation of their cases.

In a seven-page motion, former Mayor Leovegildo Rural and former administrator Guillermo Salvidueza said the charges filed against them by the Office of the Ombudsman were "baseless, groundless and exploding with political undertones."

The two former officials were accused of issuing allegedly spurious permits to transport illegally cut logs from protected ecological areas and government lands in the town.

In December 2004, Rural, Salvidueza and landholder Isi Nakar and fellow when two typhoons struck northern Quezon, leaving more than 1,000 people killed and missing.

The tragedy was blamed on unchecked illegal logging in the province.

In asking for a reinvestigation of the case, Rural said he had acted within his powers as mayor and did not exercise any authority belonging to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources.

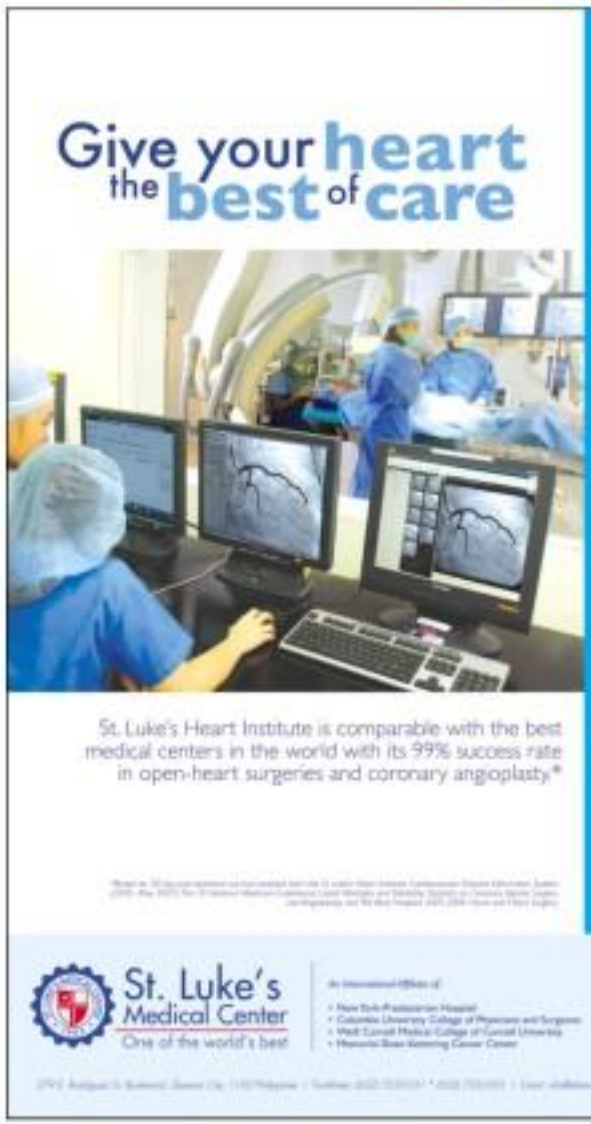
Both accused claimed that the investigating prosecutor of the Office of the Ombudsman committed "grave and serious error" when the latter failed to take into consideration certain provisions of the Local Government Code of 1991.

They pointed out that under the law, the environmental powers were no longer exclusive to the DENR as they had already been devolved to local governments.

"The investigating Ombudsman prosecutor ought to have known that the DENR does not issue any kind of transport permit for logs or lumber and it does not exercise such an authority on its own," they stressed in their motion.

They also said that the 223 cases filed against them were anchored on "flimsy and unfounded" conclusion of the law and that the prosecution would fail to establish their guilt beyond reasonable doubt.

The cases, they claimed, would only clog the docket of the Sandiganbayan.



S. Cotabato gov't to ban open-pit mining

KORONADAL CITY – The plan of Sultan Kudarat Governor Suharto to allegedly use open-pit mining in Tampakan, South Cotabato, is being threatened by a **proposal from the** provincial government to ban this type of mining.

Xstrata is conducting exploration in the Tampakan mines, through SagittariusMines Inc. (SMI).

Among Suharto's reported strategies to extract gold and copper from the area is the use of open-pit mining.

But neither Xstrata nor SMI has confirmed the method they would use when the extraction activities go on full swing by 2010.

"Open-pit mining is an irresponsible mining [method]," Vice Gov. Elrick Ogena said during the conclusion of the public consultations by the provincial board on the proposed provincial environmental code on 15 last week.

Warning

Tampakan Vice Mayor Pedro Cagan, a noted supporter of SMI, warned that the passage of the Environmental Code could send a wrong signal to investors.

But it appeared that there was no stopping the provincial board from passing the code.

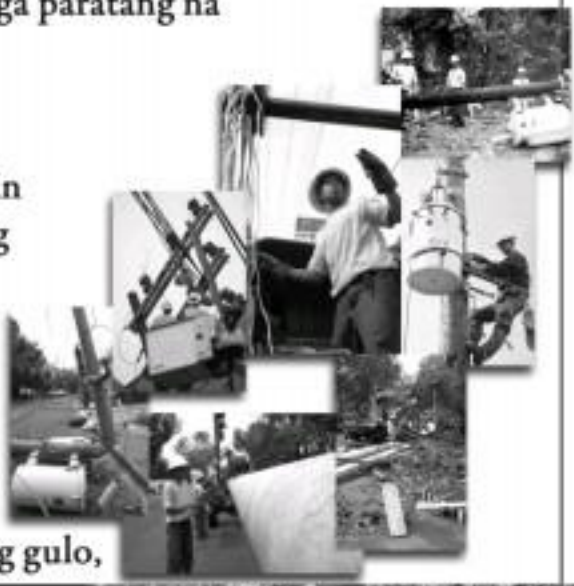
On May 14, it approved the measure on first reading and had deliberated it for more deliberations next week.

Ogena said he was not opposed to responsible mining, but that he believes that open-pit mining was not good.

"Once the environment is damaged, not only Tampakan but many places will be affected, including the health and welfare of future generations," he said. **Aquilino Z. Dorda, inquirer Mindanao**

Masakit man ang mga paratang na
hindi naman totoo,

ang mahalaga sa amin
ay mabigyan kayo ng
tapat na serbisyo.



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bumagyo o anumang gulo,

kami ay nandito upang
paglingkuran kayo.

MERALCO

may liwanag ang buhay

8 killed as 'Cosme' slams northern Luzon

thousands of houses were damaged in Ilocos Sur, Cosme alone.

At least four people died in Pangasinan, three were killed in La Union, and one died in Benguet.

Reports reaching the Provincial Disaster Coordinating Council (PDCC) said two persons died in flagellum-associated accidents in San Fabian town.

Leandro Soriano, 72, was hit by a galvanized iron sheet while Genaro Bani died after a caravan tree fell on his house in Bugallon. A 36-year-old man, identified only as Jhamal, was pinned by a fallen mango tree in Barangay Bolaoit in San Fabian.

Police said the fourth fatality was a 2-year-old boy whose body was found floating in the Tayap River at Garadang Norzagaray, Rio Chico Pantoc, aged 3 and 4, were still missing.

The Office of Civil Defense said the La Union fatalities were Domingo Obsequio, who was hit by a collapsed concrete wall, Juanito Bobis, who was struck by a flying galvanized iron sheet, and Marciano Ancheta, 72, who drowned.

Accountant Joseph Pulido was killed in Benguet when his van struck by a falling rock while digging for water supply, the OCD said.

At least 27,000 people were affected by the storm.

Dr. Anthony Galvez, deputy administrator of the Office of Civil Defense (OCD), told reporters in Manila that **health department officials were still** verifying the reported deaths.

Zambales and Pangasinan were hardest hit by Cosme, he said.

"It's only May and we've already had three typhoons. It's as if it's not normal," Galvez said. "Pagasa (Philippine Atmospheric, Geophysical and Astronomical Services Administration) said there would be 20 to 22 typhoons this year. **Let's not be complacent because** the typhoon season is only about to start."

Cosme moving out

Cosme was headed for the Philippine Sea, and northern Luzon could expect improved weather conditions today, Pagasa said.

The storm was expected to be 330 km southeast of Basco, Batanes, this morning and would no longer be within the Philippine area of responsibility by tomorrow, said Pagasa weather forecaster **Abel Umbawel Cruz.**

"There will be improved weather conditions in Luzon in the absence of any storm that could enhance the southwest monsoon or habagat," Cruz said. But **the region will still experience** light rains, he said.

Steve Murillo will have the weather in the coming days, Cruz said.

Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro **Jr. conducted an aerial inspection** of the damage in Pangasinan. From there, he will proceed to Zambales.

Thousands of families were left homeless in Pangasinan and Zambales as **strong winds and waves battered** coastal communities.

Several roads in Benguet were closed as landslides hit the area.

Central Luzon

Strong winds damaged some 7,000 houses in Ilo. Cruz town in Zambales.

The provincial government opened **three evacuation centers to public schools** in Barangays Maddapuo and Santa, and at Ilo. Cruz Academy in the town proper.

More than 300 families or about 3,000 people living near the shores of the beach China Sea sought refuge there.

At least 23 houses in a resettlement site in Barangay Cawag in Subic town were damaged as heavy rains and strong winds pounded the area on Saturday. Most of them had crushed walls and floors, reports said.

The Department of Social Welfare and Development said floods hit villages in Botolan, San Antonio and Iba towns, all in Zambales.

Pangasinan damage

Major roads in Pangasinan were littered with galvanized iron sheets from rooftops, fallen trees and electric posts and other debris.

"We did not expect the typhoon to be this strong," Gov. Amado Espino Jr. said. "We can see the devastation but we cannot accurately get the damage because our local officials are still in the process of assessing the damage."

Power was also battered by the storm. Communication was cut off after trees fell on electric and telephone lines.

Several families were reported to have been evacuated to Lingayen, Calasiao and Binmaley towns, and to San Carlos City.

Espino ordered clearing operations on major roads to ease the flow of traffic.

Worst hit by Cosme were western and central Pangasinan towns, he said. He said he had recommended the declaration of a state of calamity.

Dagupan badly hit

Dagupan Administrator Alvin Fernandez said the city was "badly hit but we cannot assess yet the damage to property (because) it's massive."

"The catch is that we are prepared for relatively but not this type ... which was unexpected," he said.

Fernandez said Dagupan would be placed under a state of calamity.

"The fish pens, the crops are all destroyed. Most of the houses, especially those made of light materials, have been damaged," he said. Barges (milkfish pens and ponds in the city were all destroyed, the fish cottages in the Lingayen Gulf.

At the city jail, three inmates escaped during a riot at 7 p.m. One of them was later rearrested.

Several businesses stores in Calasiao town ran out of supplies, especially rails, as many residents started rebuilding their houses.

Landslides in Benguet

In Benguet, landslides that hit the province's interior roads caused relief efforts to scramble for pathmakers to clear the obstructions. Several private companies sent roads-clearing equipment.

As of 11 a.m. Sunday, the following areas were closed to traffic: Kodak-Ambuklao-Bokod in Bakiwas and Bokod towns; Dalupirip and Twin Peaks in Lagawe town; Benguet Road to Tublay, and Palina in Tuba.

The Barangay Halsiadan section of the Halsiadan Highway in Baguio town was closed, but Gov. Nestor Fongwan immediately sent a payloader there to clear the area. The highway passes through the major vegetable-producing towns of La Trinidad, Tuba, Sablan, Baguio and Kibungan in Benguet, and Banko in Ifugao province.

Fongwan allayed fears of a severe vegetable supply saying the Halsiadan along Asin, Tuba and Kibungan towns was not open.

At least 21 houses in Sitio Toll Gate, Barangay Mali Sitio Pewase and Green Valley in Barangay Camp 6 along Session Road were damaged by landslides.

Roads leading to Ifugao and Mt. Province were also closed due to several landslides.

Only Benguet was closed among the major routes in Baguio City, reports from the OCD in the Cordillera said.

The agency said two other landslides were reported along Kennon and that it ordered its closure as a "preventive measure."

The Itogon-Sinipsip-Ifugao-Mt. Province road, Benner-Bangbang road and Buneng-Mayoyao road were also closed. Clearing operations started on Sunday.

In Baguio City, a house near the Municipal Elementary School was covered in a landslide but no fire occupants were ordered.

The OCD said landfall in Baguio measured 106.86 millimeters on Sunday. Reports from the Cordillera Administrative Region's Provincial Disaster Coordination Council: Benguet—Fuentes, Delmar Carday, Frank Cimain and Theresa Cabrera, Inquirer Northern Luzon; Duarte Gregan, Carmelo Reyes and Robert Dumanja, Inquirer Central Luzon, and Jocelyn Uy in Manila

BLOWN TOP The roof of a house in Dagupan City was blown off at the height of Tropical Storm "Cosme" in Pangasinan.
PHOTOS BY CHARMAINE CRUZ, ANTI-HOTSPOTS.COM

Esperon appointed peace adviser

Esperon said he did not expect the appointment was hanging over with the Moro National Liberation Front (MNLF) in the 1990s, he would meet the rebels in field encounters "but in the end, we embraced each other to peace."

He said he would cut his vacation short and be back in Manila before the end of the month "to prepare for the job."

In a radio interview, Esperon said his new assignment included talking peace not only with the communist National Democratic Front (NDF) but also with the MILF and "probably with the MNLF."

'A wolf in a lion house'

Asked if he would be willing to negotiate with rebel soldiers led by incarcerated Sen. Antonio Trillanes IV, Maj. Gen. Benito Mendiola and Army Brig. Gen. Danilo Lim, Esperon said he did had to discuss this with Mr. Arroyo.

Opposition Sen. Jamby Madrigal, however, described Mr. Arroyo's move as "unparalleled hypocrisy," saying it was like "appointing Hitler or Stalin to head a peace panel or putting a wolf in a lion's house."

"Mr. Esperon is a self-confessed and unrepentant hawk. His appointment makes a mockery of all attempts to forge genuine peace in the country, all serious attempts for peace have been undermined by this dastardly appointment. This is sheer political accommodation," she said in a text message.

Bayan Muna Rep. Satur Ocampo yesterday said Esperon's appointment showed the Arroyo's lack of sincerity in pushing for peace with leftist insurgents.

"Esperon is the key implementor of the counterinsurgency program Oplan Bantay Laya then (AFP Special Support Group Philip Alcon says includes an elements extrajudicial killings and enforced disappearances," Ocampo said.

Hardline condition

He said Esperon's "hardline condition of a three-year ceasefire before peace talks is guaranteed to negate the small advance" in replacement talks between the government and the NDF, the umbrella group that includes the Communist Party of the Philippines and its armed wing, the New People's Army.

"They know that the NDF doesn't want a long ceasefire. If they will insist on something close to unconceivable, then that only shows the government

is not sincere in wanting to have peace with the NDF" Ocampo said.

Bayan secretary general Renato Reyes Jr. described Esperon as "the embodiment of the peace process" because of the surge in political killings under his watch as the AFP

The human rights group Karapatan recorded 887 extrajudicial killings and 203 enforced disappearances from Jan. 21, 2001 to Oct. 31, 2007, that the figures have been severely disputed by the military.

"President Macapagal-Arroyo appointed the general who is in a state of denial over the extrajudicial killings. How can he help advance peace?" Reyes asked. With reports from Nikko Dizon, Gil C. Cabacungan Jr., Norman Bordadora and Jocelyn R. Uy

RCBC manager is bank massacre's 10th victim

died yesterday from his head wound as it is hospital.

Inspector Panse, a manager at the RCBC branch, had been in critical condition for two days following one of the bloodiest bank robberies in the country's history that had left nine people dead.

The attack appalled Malacañang, the banking community and the public.

Panse's death coincided with the announcements of Philippine National Police Director General Avelino Razon Jr. that he had relieved Supt. Moises Pagdanan as police chief of Calauyan.

Pagdanan has been reassigned to the Directorate for Police Regional Office 4A (Calabarzon), a PNP statement said.

Senior Supt. Felipe Rojas Jr., Laguna police director, said the investigation would continue without Panse. "There is no perfect crime. Surely, we will find some leads," he told the Inquirer.

Whatever Panse knew about the murderous rampage at the bank would go with him to the grave. He was declared dead by doctors at St. James Hospital in Laguna at around 10:30 a.m. on Sunday.

For his widow, Loreta Chaley Panse, her 55-year-old husband's death was his way of protecting his family from harm.

"If he lived to tell what he knew, his family would have been at risk. Maybe this was his way of protecting us," Loreta said in an interview at La Fonderia Pila in Pila (Antipolo City).

Panse had been shot in the temple.

Loreta said Panse never got the chance to talk to anyone in the last hours of his life.

"He couldn't talk to him at all. His eyes never closed the whole time," she said.

The waiting was agony their third child, 30-year-old Francis Dominic said.

On Thursday, Panse will be cremated in the funeral home per his wish, his widow told the Inquirer.

Their daughter, 35-year-old Lesley Anne, said Panse did not want his ashes to lie in state in a memorial lot.

Loreta, who also once held a position at Bank of the Philippine Islands, said her husband's job as "relationship manager for corporate banking" at the Calauyan branch often caused her distress because of the possibility of robberies.

"He always told him: 'Don't fight if the bank gets robbed. It's not your money anyway,' He'd reply: 'Of course, of course,'" she said.

There was still no official word on how much money the robbers stole. But authorities and security experts quoting bank officials said the amount could have been between P11 million and P13 million.

Panse may have been a witness to **the killing of his right- an employee** and one client.

Also killed were branch manager Roberto Magallanes Cuarto, teller Benjamin Medino and Olga Gonzales; **operations assistant Noel Miranda**, new accounts officer Teresa Enriquez, cashier service head Bernardo Lapasan Jr., security guard Balthazar Agallonido, and a depositor's representative, Ferdinand Serrano.

2 more witnesses

Each of the victims suffered a single bullet wound in the head, police said.

Rojas said the police were confident the grisly crime would be solved in time. He said the police had two other witnesses whose identities could not be disclosed for now.

One was a female co-worker of Anacleto, who saw the victim enter the bank and being approached by a man wearing a black jacket, according to police.

The witness was waiting for Anacleto to return but when she noted that something bad was happening inside, she fled to safety.

Anacleto worked at Ivorlar Wonders Inc. inside the Laguna Industry and Science Park, Rojas said.

Another witness was the driver of the getaway vehicle supposedly used by the robbers.

Sketches prepared

Asked if the witnesses clearly remembered the faces of the gunmen, Rojas said: "Their descriptions were not clear." But he said police were now completing artist's sketches of the suspects.

Police previously said five to six gunmen had gained access to the bank through the back door and waited for the bank employees to arrive. They then cowed the bank's security personnel and clients.

Some hours after the bullets were fired, police recovered a gray Nissan van owned by a state bank employees which was abandoned in Barangay Turbina here.

Chief Supt. Ricardo L. Padilla, Calabarzon police director, said the police would not stop hunting the killers. "With the help of other witnesses, we can easily identify and catch (these) criminals," he said.

P3-M reward

The reward for those who give information that would lead to the killers' arrest has been raised to P2 million. Of the amount, P1 million came from RCBC, P500,000 from Sen. Ramon "Bong" Revilla, P500,000 from Governor Lanzon and P500,000 from friends and relatives of the victims.

Pagdanan will be replaced by Chief Insp. Alexander Asiero as officer in charge of the Calauyan police.

The relief was a result of the PNP's "zero tolerance policy" on bank robberies, PNP spokesperson Chief Supt. Nestor Barandon told the Inquirer. "If there is a bank robbery in the area of responsibility, the police chief will be relieved for failing to pursue it from beginning," he said.

He said a successful bank robbery mirrored a police chief's "failure to strengthen the security in the area within the bank."

Positive leads

Razon was confident that the investigation "will reach a significant breakthrough very soon". Following an assessment of "some positive leads and evidence."

Razon ordered the regional directors to reimplement the seventy checkpoints in areas with bank branches and other commercial establishments.

"Under the security clustering system, a police team under a supervisor will be assigned to provide security in three clustered areas," he said.

Razon instructed the police directors to also step up vehicular surveillance to the Calabarzon police in the meantime for the killers.

Daytime checkpoints

Police and communities were ordered to establish checkpoints even during daytime, especially during banking hours.

"Chiefs of police were ordered to come out of their offices and personally lead these operations," the PNP statement said.

"It is not enough that police personnel are deployed but that they are deployed and supervised," Razon said.

Bankbase and the measures being carried out by the police to prevent another bank robbery included a more aggressive implementation of the "no plate, no travel" policy.

The PNP will implement a crackdown on illegal transfers of plates, use of unauthorized/unconventional and easy plates, and unregistered vehicles.

Investigators noted that the vehicle used by the killers in the RCBC robbery did not have license plates.

Yao Ming sets off quake of protest

Homepage A1

...his generous with his own donation.

China's richest celebrity donated 100,000 yuan ($70,000) to a relief fund, sparking fierce criticism on the Internet that the donation was too little from a basketball hero known for his charity work.

"It hit stingy itself it?" one Internet user wrote.

The 7.9-magnitude quake in China's southwest Sichuan province killed tens of thousands of people, according to government estimates, with more than thousands still missing and believed buried under the rubble of devastated towns.

Yao, the 2.26-meter (seven-foot-six-inch) Houston Rockets center has been at the top of the Forbes magazine list of richest Chinese celebrities for the past five years. Last year, he earned $55 million from basketball and sponsorship activities.

Yao's initial offer of 500,000 yuan triggered his own "earthquake of protest," said Mangyu (www.mangyu.com), a top-record microsoft websites.

Critics maintain that the donation was hear change to a man who makes more than that with one promotional photo shoot.

"If 500,000 dollars—not to mention 500,000 yuan...disappeared from his bank account, he wouldn't even notice," told one fan.

Internet criticism of Yao forced the basketball star to increase his donation to 2,000,000 yuan later in the week, according to media reports.

Criticism of sparring between is rampant in China where they are often seen as national icons.

Yao is known for his charity work, raising more than a million dollars for underprivileged Chinese children last year and devoting time and energy toward helping raise the 2007 Special Olympics in his home city of Shanghai.

But some Chinese are not slow to attack Yao when it comes to money, accusing him of not giving enough of his enormous wealth back to his home country.

"He's here drinking milk and eating bread (like an Australian) for a while and he's forgotten where he comes," one posting said. "You are Chinese!"

Although supporters were outnumbered by critics, many people agreed with one commentator who said that contributions were a personal matter, and "whatever Yao gives is his business."

On Friday China's state media reported that Zhou Liu, 92-year-old widow of China's late leader Deng, had donated her life savings totaling 100,000 yuan to give to earthquake victims.

She reportedly found it hard to sleep and ate after hearing of the tragedy.

State media have played up donations by leaders, business tycoons and others, but donations by the poor have also caught the public eye.

A migrant worker, who is at the bottom rung of China's labor market, donated 600 yuan which amounted to his income monthly salary.

"It might not seem like much, but when you consider it's his whole month's income he gave far more than Yao Ming," one commentator said.

AFP

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Summit in Panglao may result in political truce

Previous page 2

some position fund, Government Service Insurance System, can buy out all other shareholders of Meralco who wanted to sell, "but not me."

Lopez said any decision to sell the family's controlling shares in Meralco would have to be decided by the family. Lopez gave the interview after Garcia last week announced a takeover bid by the government of Meralco, calling for a change in its management. The takeover bid was promptly called by Oscar Lopez, the family's patriarch, who dared the GSIS to buy out the family's shares in Meralco.

On Friday, Manuel Lopez reinforced Oscar Lopez's challenge, saying he had no quarrel with the government and that he would like to meet the President to discuss the commission electricity rates and to explain Meralco's side.

Meralco has been deluged by a barrage of attacks by government officials at the one-sided hearings last week at the Joint Congressional Power Commission (Powercom), chaired by Sen. Miriam Defensor-Santiago and the President's son Pangasinan Rep. Juan Miguel Arroyo, said at the privately independent Energy Regulatory Commission where the government had lodged countless petitions asking the ERC to order Meralco to cut down its rates.

"If it's just a question of trying to bring down power rates, we are with the government in wanting to bring down the power rates," Manuel Lopez said.

Underlying issue

In the light of the politicized circumstances surrounding the GSIS bid and the congressional hearings, it is hard to believe that the Arroyo-Lopez summit will be strictly confined to bringing down the rates.

It is also problematic whether the President and Manuel Lopez could avoid the underlying issue of the deeply running political dread between her and the Lopezes, despite Malacañang's disclaimer that it had nothing to do with Garcia's moves.

Tomorrow's summit comes ahead of the crucial May 27 annual stockholders' meeting of Meralco, where both Lopez and the GSIS are battling for proxy votes and girding for a showdown for control of the 11-member Meralco board. The meeting is certain to be a test of strength for the government to muster proxy votes to buy out Meralco.

The Lopez family owns 33.4 percent of Meralco's shares against 30 percent held by the government—21 percent of which is owned by the GSIS. The Lopez group has five seats in the Meralco board to four of the GSIS, with two held by independents. The Lopezes are fighting tooth and nail to retain control of the board, and consequently Meralco's management.

Face-to-face confrontation

The Arroyo administration has denied that it is behind the GSIS takeover bid and would like the public to believe that its effort is purely a market-driven initiative and on publicly known enemy-political relations with the Lopez family have nothing to do with the GSIS campaign.

But the Arroyo administration also is known to be chafing from the persistent attacks and criticisms from MER-CEN (very corruption allegations and its security policies relating to its restrictions on media coverage of political exclusives stemming from coup attempts.

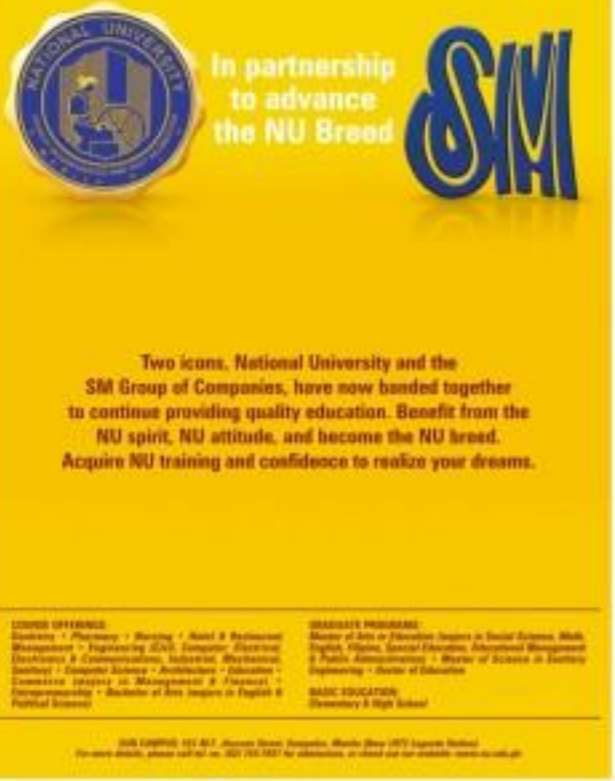
The Hobol summit is the first time that the Arroyo administration is confronting the economic power of the Lopez family which has during the past 50 years survived attempts to crush it by several post-war governments, notably those of President Diosdado Macapagal, Mr Arroyo's father, in the 1960s and President Ferdinand Marcos in the 1970s who confiscated Meralco and ABS-CBN with martial law powers. In these battles, the Lopezes fought with their media weapons, something they are now using to damage the personal reputations, with considerable success.

The current Arroyo-Lopez confrontation is no less fierce and no side is emerging unscathed. The summit in Bohol has far-reaching implications for the balance of power between the political owner's interventionism in business and economy of private sector economic power owners. It is not a battle merely between Ms Arroyo and the Lopezes.

Zero-sum solution

The summit is not expected to focus on bringing down power rates. Details of these issues have been raised at the Senate-ers hearings, those at the ERC, and the public forums of the media. There's no doubt that they're important. The Lopezes must have to answer the numerous allegations of lack of transparency on the contentious power rates.

But in terms of output, they have to make way for the immediate concerns of the summit. This is about establishing a framework of compromise and a political truce within which some kind of temporary peace to which mechanisms to bring down power rates can be forged. I don't believe the Bohol summit will produce a zero-sum solution. Continuing hostility would be mutually destructive.



Jeepney, bus fares up

From page A1

Ilog said in a telephone interview that the board approved the temporary fare increase on Saturday night.

Central Luzon (Region 3), eastern Visayas, Bicol, Western Visayas, Cagayan Valley, and Zamboanga, Soccsksargen, Caraga and Northern Mindanao (Regions 6, 8, 10, 11, 12, 13 and the Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao) also have new fares.

Central Luzon (Region 3) covers Aurora, Bataan, Bulacan, Nueva Ecija, Pampanga, Tarlac, and Zambales. Region 4, which used to be Southern Tagalog, is currently divided into Region 4A or Calabarzon (Cavite, Laguna, Batangas, Rizal, Quezon), and Region 4B or Mimaropa (Occidental Mindoro and Oriental Mindoro, Marinduque, Romblon, Palawan).

Taxis not included

Lambert said taxis were not included in the temporary fare increase but that drivers could avail themselves of subsidies for fuel and tolls put in a government program allowing poor households to buy National Food Authority rice at P16.25 a kilo.

"Only petitions submitted 15 days or earlier were considered in this case so far a postponement has been filed," he said. "Those submitted from petition no. Thursday, so we would be hearing their petition on June 26."

Taxi operators are seeking permission to add P10 to the total metered bill per trip.

The militant transport group Pagkakaisa ng mga Samahan ng Tsuper at Operator Nationwide (Piston) branded the fare increase a mere stop-gap measure and said it would not address the drivers' and the public's main problem of soaring oil prices increases.

Piston suggestion

Piston secretary general George San Mateo said the drivers would not benefit from the provisional fare increase because the amount would go straight to the pockets of the oil companies.

San Mateo said the drivers and the public would have gotten more relief if the government had heeded the drivers group's plea to scrap the 12-percent expanded value-added tax (EVAT) on oil and the Oil Deregulation Law, which they claimed allowed oil companies to raise their prices with impunity.

Such actions, he added, would have led to a rollback in gas, diesel and LPG prices.

San Mateo warned of more transport strikes in the future, saying continued oil price increases were a "ticking time bomb."

"Unless the increase in oil prices stops and unless the government stops its complicity with the big oil cartel, Piston and its allies will continue their protests until the government acts on the drivers' and people's call to the remove the E-VAT on oil, stop the price increases and junk the Oil Deregulation Law," he said in a statement.

Added burden

The Piston official also lamented that the fare hike would only add to the burden of passengers who continued to grapple with the rising prices of basic goods, despite the grant of a P125 daily wage increase recently.

The moderate Pinagkaisahang Samahgan ng Mandla ng Jubtrfx Drivers Association Nationwide Inc. (Pasang-Masda) welcomed the provisional fare increase as "a temporary relief to jeepney drivers."

Pasang Masda president Roberto Martin stressed, however, that drivers were still pushing for approval of their pending petitions. His group wants a minimum fare of P9 from P7.50 plus an additional P0.50 per succeeding kilometer or P1.75.

Jeepney groups allied with the party-list LAKAS, including Bayanihan, the largest jeepney organization in the country, are asking for the same increase.

Duero is seeking a fare increase of P1 for the first four kilometers and P0.25 per succeeding kilometer.

Bus operators

The Provincial Bus Operators Association of the Philippines (PBOAP), a number of transport party-list group LAKAS, welcomed the temporary fare increase for buses.

PBOAP president Homer Mayuga said the fare increase at least gave operators and drivers some relief while their petitions were being heard.

The group wants ordinary provincial buses to charge their passengers P12 for the first 5 km plus P0.40 per succeeding km. Currently, ordinary provincial buses charge P9.50 for the first 5 km plus P1.30 for every succeeding km.

Metro Manila bus groups, led by the Integrated Metro Bus Operators Association (Imboa), want ordinary Metro buses to charge their passengers P10.50 for the first 5 km, plus P2.00 per succeeding kilometer thereafter. They also want a guaranteed increase of P1 for the first 5 km while their main petition is pending.

For air-conditioned buses, the bus groups want a P2 provisional increase.

Currently, ordinary metro buses charge P8 for the first 5 km plus P1.75 for every succeeding kilometer thereafter.

Among Metro and provincial buses, aircon units charge about 20 percent higher than their ordinary counterparts, according to prevailing regulations.

Commuters stoic

Metro Manila commuters interviewed by the Inquirer said they would just bear the additional fare but would wish short distances to save on daily expenses.

Gina Bernales, a resident of Cavite who works in Makati City, said: "I understand why they need to impose the hike. With the oil price hikes, drivers would lose income if they didn't raise the fare.... I would just walk if the distance is short. (It's) a little sacrifice to save on expense and also a chance to get some exercise."

Brendial Simpores, a graduate student, said: "It's rainy season so (if) rather ride than be drowned in the rain. But walking is still an option." *With a report from Leila B. Salaverria*

Inquirer grants wish . . .

From page A1

were three cops unmanned?" (July 5, 2002), **"Kali's family brings hope to the Tanauans"** (July 18, 2002) and **"Windows was MacArthur's key to victory"** (Dec. 15, 2002).

Arches says that he wrote because columnist Conrado Bayos requesting for a copy of her book "Journalism in Jay Cassidy."

Days was so touched by his praise that she not only sent Arches a book but also explained his letter in the paper on Dec. 22, 1996. Since then, he has been getting books in the mail sent by kind souls.

The business also ran a story on Arches on Oct. 7, 1998, with his picture, lying in bed, doing a radio broadcast by phone. This led to a feature on Ronina Sanchez's "Hallang K" TV show.

When the business ran its 22 wishes contest last year, Arches again wrote to the paper: "[Because] of [what] the business has done for me in the past, I wish for nothing more. Wish! People who are not reading in my room say I am such crass guy using a laptop, not a manual typewriter. A laptop, then, is what I wish the business [would] grant me."

On Wednesday, Arches got his wish—a laptop with a license printer. The team were brought to his home by his friends, Eunice Novia and Jake Cardova.

Novia and Cardova, who are active in volunteer work, picked up the laptop and printer from the business office in Makati City and brought it to Arches' home here.

As a frail double man, Arches espoused causes that earned him a lot of enemy politicians, lawmakers, the army, the clergy and a politician who slapped him with a P25-million libel suit.

He got support from church leaders, the academe, MDB and students for his tirades against the politicians. The libel case was later dismissed by the prosecutor's office.

Orphaned at the age of 2, Arches learned to work on the streets shining shoes, selling magazines and newspapers, fruits and fetching balls during tennis matches.

To Ronnie Flores took him in and brought him to the Divine Word College Minor Seminary Laoag, he was sent to Christ the King Seminary in Quezon City.

Arches studied education at the Western Philippine Colleges (now University of Hawaii-Pacific) and later took Law subjects.

From 1972-1976, he taught at St. Turson's College in Bauan, Batangas, and then accepted work as project assistant at the Development Academy of the Philippines. He worked 18 years at the NIA.

GSIS chief peeved . . .

From page A1

Garcia said.

"The issue is why they are accountable to no one after willing this country for so long," he added.

Garcia said he would pursue his bid to change the management of Meralco either through a proxy fight or a buy-out of the Lopezes' entire stake in the company.

GSIS buyout offer stands

Garcia said the Lopez family can should make up their minds about selling one of the family's jewels. Family patriarch Oscar Lopez, a nonagenarian, announced his willingness to sell, but his younger brother Manuel, chair of Meralco, stressed that the decision should be made collectively by the clan.

"My offer still stands. I will sit down with them soon to lay down my offer," Garcia said.

Garcia claimed that his crusade for the consumer's good and good governance in Meralco has already paid dividends. Garcia said that Meralco had been forced to refund its customers either through reduced demand if improper of the ability to demand cash deposits for each electric meter it installed since 2004 under the Magna Carta for Residential Consumers.

He noted that the collections from the meters deposits had reached P21.4 billion as of 2007, which would mean a huge windfall for customers upon reimbursement.

But he doubted Meralco was drawn close enough to the money of its customers considering that it had only P14.4 billion of the P20 billion in income taxes it collected from customers from 1996 to 2002, more than five years after the Supreme Court ordered it to return the money.

He said Meralco was also forced to submit that it had been passing on its customers the unused power bills amounting to P427 million, which the utility firm insisted was sanctioned by the Energy Regulatory Commission.

"Meralco would have no trade these allotments had it not been exposed in the first place," Garcia said.

Senate edicts have pointed to the Lopezes' media empire and not its power holdings as the target of the government's takeover threats and Garcia himself has helped fuel this perception. "They (Lopezes) use ABS-CBN as a chip to insulate the track for the barbarians of their vested interests. That is why most people are afraid of them," Garcia said.

GMA sending wrong signal

Brit, Alan Peter Cayetano said until the GSIS' "undemocratic" move to take control of Meralco could set a precedent.

"It takeover threat with government funds is bad policy and is sending a wrong signal to the business community. There has to be a better way of conserving not only Meralco's ratio but also Petron's and other oil corporations' and of PLDT (Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co.) and Globe than a takeover threat," said Cayetano in an interview with the Inquirer.

"That has a chilling effect both on the business sector and the media," he said.

Cayetano said the Palace-sanctioned GSIS moves reply the government's use of state power to harass businessmen in the country, from subsidiary threats of forced buyouts to businessmen critical of the Arroyo administration to giving "new cronies" with juicy deals.

"The real target is Mth-CBN," said Sen. Aquilino Pimentel Jr., who also warned of the same negative signals sent by the GSIS threat.

"What they are doing to the Lopezes is a message to others to be more careful when dealing with government. The government is showing that it's not do this to the powerful Lopez family, it can also do this to you. That is their message to all," Pimentel said. "The public should be concerned because there are other firms that could follow Meralco's fate." *With a report from Christine O. Avendaño*

More Sports stories on A29 to A32

Late SPORTS

Editor Teddyboy S. Philandrez
Assistant Editor Francis T.J. Ochoa

Aces get back at Barako; Kings score

By Jane Navarro

ALASKA MORE DOWN RED BULL IMPORT ADAM PARADA AND THE ACES want no rainbow (for Barako, 101-90), in the Smart-PBA Pinoy Conference best-eight at the Araneta Coliseum.

Sonny Thoss and Sandy Dulevo each turn tending the 7-foot Pinoda out of his comfort zone and the Aces picked up their first back-to-back wins in the conference by quashing several attempts by Red Bull to save the game around.

"Winning two straight games is a positive sign. But our record is very negative," said Alaska coach Tim Cone, whose Aces notched only their fourth victory in 10 games. "Hopefully, we could gain momentum from here."

Chris Alexander scored a personal career-high 24 points and grabbed 21 rebounds as Barangay Ginebra stopped a two-game skid with a 110-70 drubbing of Welcoat in the other game. The Gin Kings improved to 2-7 while sending the Dragons to their seventh defeat after 10 games.

Parada still finished with 27 points and 22 rebounds, but he was denied down by a fifth foul in the dying minutes and Thoss came up with a defensive gem that derailed Red Bull's allery attempt.

"Thoss sensed away Parada's underpaid shot while Phillip Miller completed a four-point play off a foul by Arjo Daniel on the other end that pushed the Aces ahead, 95-82, inside four minutes.

"Mr. (Thoss) just banged him (Parada) up relentlessly," said Cone.

"The reason why we didn't get a serious foot import to be Sonny to have a chance to develop as a country," explained Cone.

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Editor Peter G. Dipasupil

Pardoned Magdalo officers go job-hunting

Ex-soldiers look for work at PDEA

By Nikko Dizon

HOURS AFTER THEIR RELEASE FROM DETENTION on Friday, five of the nine pardoned former Magdalo junior rebel officers promptly went job-hunting.

After being released at past noon Friday from the Army's Custodial Management Unit in Fort Bonifacio, Senior Army Captains Albert Baloloy, Alvin Rivera and Julio Solidum and Senior 1st Lieutenants Cleo Horgan and Florentino Ramora got into a taxi cab.

Their destination: The Philippine Drug Enforcement Agency office in Quezon City.

"The group asked the cab driver to take them to a station of the Metro Rail Transit from where they could take the train to Quezon City.

But there was a long line of passengers at the MRT station so the five decided to hop into another taxi cab which broke down in Guadalupe, Makati City.

Undeterred, the former officers transferred into another taxi cab and finally reached the PDEA office at 2:45 p.m.

Unfortunately, PDEA Director Dionisio Santiago, a former ground forces chief of staff, was out of his office.

The five decided to cool their heels at the agency's canteen, uncertain whether they would be able to talk to Santiago.

After calling up some friends working at the PDEA, the group finally met Santiago at around 5 p.m.

Santiago said he was unaware that the freed former Magdalo officers were waiting for him at his office.

"So this is how it feels like to be applying for a job," Baloloy said with a chuckle. "We're used to working; that's why we came here right away."

Baloloy said his companions are hoping to join the 17 other rank-leaders of the Magdalo group who became PDEA agents following their release from prison in December last year by virtue of an executive clemency by President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Santiago said the employment prospects at the PDEA for the five—all graduates of the Philippine Military Academy—were bright. The agency has still several positions to fill up.

But of course, Santiago said, the former officers would have to go through the usual application procedure and training to become anti-illegal drug agents.

Baloloy, a 1995 PMA graduate, is the first among the nine to be released from detention.

Also released on Friday were Senior Army Captains Gerardo Gambala, Milo Maestrecampo, Laurence Lanto Somera and 2nd Lt. Kristoffer Bryan Yang, who were freed after nearly five years in detention for leading the failed Oakwood mutiny on July 27, 2003.

They were pardoned by Mrs. Arroyo after they admitted that they were guilty of staging a coup against her government and tearfully asked for her "mercy and grace."

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PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT
Children hone their skills in martial arts at the Quezon Memorial Circle in Quezon City.

Angry woman cuts off partner's organ

By Allison W. Lopez

A WOMAN WHOSE LIVE-IN partner was preventing her to have sex with him last Saturday night cut off his organ yesterday morning.

PO3 Gerardo Cagpaliman of the Manila Police District Station 1 told Claire Nocbe, 46, could be charged with serious physical injury for what she did to her companion of three years, Julieto Barsaco, 42.

Nocbe told the police that she cut off the victim's organs after he kept on preventing her to have sex with him even though he knew she had her monthly period.

The incident happened at around 6 a.m. yesterday in the couple's house on Pedro Street in Baseo, Tondo.

Nocbe said that while she was cooking, Barsaco kept on calling her from their room. Irked, she took a knife and cut his organs off. Barsaco ran outside their house and was rushed by neighbors to a hospital.

Police later recovered the knife used by the suspect but not the victim's organ which the reportedly flushed down the toilet.

Cops recover ₱1.7-M jewelry from errant driver

By Marlon Ramos

POLICE ON SATURDAY MORNING recovered from a taxi driver a bag that contained at least P1.7 million worth of jewelry which belonged to his passenger.

The driver, Ricky Eugenio, was briefly held by policemen in Camp Karingal, Quezon City, after his passenger, Leslie Hermano, accused him of running off with her bag which she had placed in the trunk of his cab (TPIX 5491).

PO2 Dario Gutierrez Jr., case investigator, said Hermano, who had just arrived from Japan, boarded the suspect's taxi with her cousin on Friday night in Pasay City. They asked him to take them to a bus terminal in Cubao, Quezon City.

At the victim and her companion were unloading their luggage from the cab upon reaching the bus terminal, Eugenio sped off, taking with him Hermano's bag which contained assorted jewelry worth P1.7 million and P9,000 in cash.

Sgt. Franklin Heinen Mabuhay, Quezon City Police District Criminal Investigation and Detection Unit chief, said Hermano and her companion boarded another taxi to chase the suspect but failed to catch him.

The two then went to the police who sought the help of the Land Transportation Office in tracking down the driver of the said cab.

The police later arrested the suspect in his house on Bangalay Street in Barangay Bahay Toro at around 8 a.m. Saturday.

"The driver said he thought the complainant would not persist in recovering her personal belongings. Apparently, he did not know that the bag contained a big amount of jewelry," Gutierrez told the reporters.

Mabuhay said he would recommend that Gutierrez and five other QCPD-CIDG operatives who recovered the stolen items be given a commendation.

Eugenio, on the other hand, was later released from police custody after Hermano decided not to press charges against him.

CITY LIGHTS
Despite the stormy weather, the lights from lamp posts outside a mall in Pasay City seem to sparkle and emit a warm glow.

Citizen's call

Mayhem on street

IT'S RUSH HOUR and a huge traffic situation on Maysilo Street in Divisoria. Pasteur Avenue every morning because anyone driving going to Mandaluyong is using the lane as a terminal to wait for passengers when this is supposed to be open to passing motorists. In the Makati Police Safety Department not doing anything about it? They should tow these jeepneys which create chaos in the morning because commuters are already affected. Thanks you.

EDEN SANTIAGO, 44, Makati City

Clogged drainage

DITO na may P. Burgos Street in Pasay City. Kasisimula pa lang dahil sa Easter ito sa dami ng drainage. Sana ang may pakialam dito? Di baba pati pa-registration dito? Di baba pati pa-inspection? Hindi ito sakop ng Pasay City because of the clogged drainage system. Who is responsible for cleaning the drainage?

ANGELO E., 23, Pasay City

End diggings!

HOW MANY more months more are Maralidcon folks, tour with the diggings right and left along the Quirino Highway, stalling traffic at any given time of day because of the unsystematic operations of the road project's contractors? We hope these contractors are banned by the government. They cannot even water the roads every hour so the dusts is not inhaled by passersby. Don't they know this is bad for the health? Another thing, Quirino Highway is probably one of the narrowest highways in the country yet the government approves to be lacking in foresight because they build offices on the route like the barangay building at the corner of Quirino Highway and F. dela Cruz Street. This makes the thoroughfare even more narrow!

ALEX J. DIESTA, Novaliches, Quezon City

JAYWALKERS ON WHEELS IN DIVISORIA
M. E. Go, 49, of Binondo, Manila writes: "I wish to call Manila Mayor Alfredo Lim's attention to pedicab drivers' blatant disregard of traffic laws in the C. M. Recto-Divisoria area. They behave like jaywalking pedestrians on wheels. If you have in the presence of mind to jot down every street and notable sidewalk, you have what you now have: Chaos and snarled traffic at all hours of the day. To see authorities, especially traffic enforcers, turn a blind eye, you would think that maybe it is true that the law doesn't apply to all ... after all.

Unnecessary road work

I WOULD like to call the attention of the traffic enforcers on Belfast Avenue at the back of SM Fairview or trek into the traffic situation there. Ano't ano pang mga nakatambak na ang kanilang dito para bukas hukayin ng ng-ganun. Ayaw magbakal ng traffic. Who is responsible why they're digging up the street when there's nothing wrong with it. This is causing traffic problems in the area. Please help us.

CALEB ARSOBAL, 46, Novaliches, Quezon City

Cruising girls and boys

WE WOULD like to bring to the attention of Quezon City Mayor Sonny Belmonte the presence of many pickup girls and boys on Banaybanay Avenue near the Payco supermarket between Quezon Ave. and E. Jacinto at their daily(s) those themselves in front of your car. Even out of the dark, especially if you are driving a non-vehicle, just to call your attention. Please do something about this matter. It does not look good for our city.

MARICO ORA JR., Quezon City

27 nabbed in drive vs crimes in Marikina

By Kristine L. Alave

THE MARIKINA CITY POLICE have arrested 27 suspected criminals, including the city's three most wanted persons, during a week-long anti-crime/safety drive last week.

Marikina City police chief, Supt. Ameer Ramon Jr., said the 27 were picked up for various offenses like loitering, malicious disturbed, robbery and physical injuries.

Six of those arrested had outstanding warrants for their arrest. One of them was Jennifer Ramon, the city's third most wanted person. She has a pending case for highway robbery in the Marikina City Regional Trial Court, the city's police chief said.

At least 180 policemen were deployed during the week-long campaign which was conducted in several areas.

"There will be more offensive operations to come in order to preempt the occurrence of street crimes in the city," Ramon said.

Marikina City's anti-crime/safety drive was in line with the Eastern Police's District's "Oplan Noah's Ark" which aims to prevent crimes in the area with the upcoming rainy season next month.

EPD director, Chief Supt. Nilo de la Cruz, also said that the campaign was in anticipation of the expected surge in street crimes in the face of rising food and fuel prices.

"The current economic crunch has prompted the director to design 'Oplan Noah's Ark' to check any problem that may arise," said De la Cruz.

In response to the reported rise in petty crimes, the EPD has set up several discipline zones in high-density areas.

Last week, the district set up a discipline zone in the busy Sakwing district in Marikina-Sapang and San Isidro. The EPD also plans to implement a similar campaign in Ilaan Boulevard, Pasig City.

Water firm replaces old, leaky pipe network in U-Belt area

By Amy R. Remo

PEOPLE RESIDING, LIVING or doing business in the City of Manila's University Belt can say goodbye to water supply problems after some months. Manila Water Services Inc. replaced the old and leaky pipe network in the area.

Under the P156 million Mayorlad rehabilitation project, some 28 kilometers of new pipelines were installed in the 95 barangays are located by Espeña, A. H. Lacson, Legarda, C. M. Recto, Quezon Boulevard and Loreta.

Mayorlad said in a statement that the project benefited 33 barangays with an estimated population of 37,224, with 5,503 house service connections installed.

With the rehabilitation of the pipe network, the water pressure was increased to seven psi ...average water pressure is pounds per square inch—from the previous 6 to 5 psi.

"With the P8 billion capital expenditure project Mayorlad is implementing for 2008, more customers can expect improved water service with the laying of new pipes and upgrading of pumping stations and reservoirs," the water firm said.

The projects are in line with the initiative of Mayorlad's new owners, DM Consunji Inc. and Metro Pacific Investments Corp., to improve service in the area to be.

DID YOU KNOW

ON MAY 19, 1521, the Spanish king ordered the establishment of seminaries of monks and priests before all Spanish colonies. The census in Manila was ordered to inspect printing presses and examine all manuscripts before publication. (Jpet L. Bondoc, Inquirer Research)

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INQUIRER

Caloocan, Valenzuela join cleanup drive

By Carmela Reyes
Inquirer Central Luzon

OFFICIALS OF BIGHEAD TOWNS IN Bulacan province and the cities of Valenzuela and Caloocan in Metro Manila have agreed to join hands in cleaning up the Marilao River which was included last year in the list of dirtiest places worldwide.

The agreement was reached in a meeting last week among Bulacan Gov. Joselito Mendoza, Marilao Mayor Eydanis Guillermo, Caloocan Mayor Enrico Echiverri and Valenzuela Mayor Sherwin Gatchalian.

The officials also pledged to allot funds for the cleanup.

Mendoza called for the meeting to discuss the state of the river and find ways of solving the pollution problem.

Bulacan officials earlier said industrial and domestic waste from the cities of Caloocan and Valenzuela were contributing to the degradation of the Marilao River.

According to Guillermo, the body of water has become a catch basin of garbage from the metropolis and nearby areas in Bulacan.

Guillermo left for the United States last week to discuss the river's case with Bulacan expatriates and to solicit their support for the cleanup drive.

Marilao Vice Mayor Jasmin Jimenez said representatives from the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, the local government of Bulacan province and the towns of Marilao, Meycauayan, San Jose del Monte, Sta. Maria and Obando, and the cities of Valenzuela and Caloocan would meet again this week to finalize plans to preserve Bulacan's waterways.

The Bigheads' business, as in

ONE AND ONLY
Strong waves did not deter a man from going fishing in Manila Bay yesterday. Fortunately, his efforts did not go unrewarded.

dependent entertainment group based in New York, included the Marilao and Meycauayan towns in its "Dirty 30" or the most polluted places in the world.

The institute's report warned that "all the sites in the Dirty 30 are very toxic and dangerous to human health."

The rivers of Meycauayan, Marilao and Obando are interconnected and are collectively called by the Intergovernmental Management Bureau as the Meycauayan River system.

US doctors increasingly disclosing errors

CHICAGO—FOR DECADES, MALPRACTICE lawyers and insurers have counseled clinicians and hospitals to "deny and defend." Many still warn clients that any admission of fault, or even expression of regret, is likely to incite litigation and imperil careers.

But cash-strapped clinicians choking on malpractice costs and scrutinized demanding action against medical errors, a handful of prominent academic medical centers, like Johns Hopkins and Stanford, are trying a dramatically opposite approach. By promptly disclosing medical errors, and offering honest apologies and fair compensation, they hope to restore integrity to their dealings with patients, make it easier to learn from mistakes and allow the anger that often fuels lawsuits to dissipate.

Despite some projections that disclosure would prompt a flood of lawsuits, hospitals **are reporting decreases in their caseloads** and savings in legal costs. Malpractice premiums have declined in some instances, though market forces may be partly responsible.

At the University of Michigan Health System, one of the first to experiment with full disclosure, existing claims and lawsuits dropped to 65 in August 2007 from 262 in August 2001, said Richard C. Boothman, the medical center's chief risk officer.

"Improving patient safety and patient communication is more likely to cure the malpractice crisis than defensiveness and denial," Boothman said.

The number of malpractice filings **against the University of Illinois** has dropped by half since it started its program just over two years ago, said Dr. Timothy B. McDonald, the hospital's chief safety and risk officer. In the 37 cases where the hospital acknowledged a preventable error and apologized, only one patient has filed suit. Only six settlements have exceeded the hospital's medical and related expenses.

Recent studies have found that one of every 300 hospital patients suffers negligent treatment, and that as many as 98,000 die each year as a result. But studies also show that as few as 20 percent of medical errors are disclosed to patients. AFP

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The WORLD

Edna Lorraine B. Suarez

Pressure builds on Burma to let aid in

RANGOON—AID WAS TRICKLING IN ON SUNday to an estimated 2.5 million people left destitute by Cyclone "Nargis" in Burma's lawlessly fertile delta as more foreign envoys tried to get the junta to admit large-scale international relief.

Thousands of children could die within weeks if food does not get to them soon, nongovernment aid organization Save the Children said.

The World Food Program (WFP), leading the outside emergency food effort, said it had managed to get food and boats to 212,000 of the 750,000 people it thinks are most in need after the May 2 storm, which left at least 134,000 dead or missing.

"It's not enough. There are a very large number of people who are yet to receive any kind of assistance and that's what's keeping me terribly worried," said Brunhilde Greb, WFP spokesperson. Manila Price said in Bangkok.

Save the Children said in a Sunday statement its research had found some "30,000 children under the age of five in the cyclone-affected Irrawaddy Delta were already malnourished before the cyclone hit" on May 2.

"Of those, Save the Children believes that several thousand are at risk of death in the next two to three weeks because of a lack of food."

In the last 50 years, only two Asian cyclones have exceeded Nargis in terms of human cost—a 1970 storm that killed 300,000 people in neighboring Bangladesh, and another that killed 143,000 in 1991, also in Bangladesh.

With the exclusive military government still refusing to open its doors to a large-scale humanitarian style aid operation, disaster experts say Nargis's body count could still climb dramatically.

To try to offset such a prospect, a steady stream of increasingly impervious diplomats have been flying into Burma (also known as Myanmar) to plead for more access for aid workers and survey flights.

France is also mooting at the United Nations, where France has accused the junta of being on the verge of a crime against humanity. On Saturday, British Prime Minister Gordon Brown condemned the generals' sluggish response as "inhuman."

The French and UK navies have ships equipped with aid and helicopters hovering off Burma's waters in the Bay of Bengal, but Paris and Naypyitaw say they will not start any aid flights from the vessels until they get a green light from the generals.

US chief humanitarian official Jon Holmes was due in Rangoon (Yangon) on Sunday evening, to meet junta No. 4 Thein Sein, who is prime minister and Burmese military aid operations leader.

Holmes was also expected to hand over a third letter from his boss, Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, to junta supremo Than Shwe, who has refused to talk to Ban on the phone since the cyclone's 123 high 1199 hurricane winds and to 1.5-degree sea surge drowned into the delta.

Confidence they are handling the crisis properly the generals took diplomats on a tour on Saturday of the delta, where people are seen sleeping in survival in an area the size of Seattle.

They appeared to have worked hard to keep the diplomats away from the destitute. Reuters

HUNDREDS of children cover their heads from the rain with empty aluminum plates as they wait for a plate of rice, a spoonful of curry and a potato in front of a donation center in the Irrawaddy Delta, Burma, on May 11. AP

Sen. Ted Kennedy rushed to hospital after seizure

BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS—US Sen. Edward "Ted" Kennedy, a Democratic Party icon and scion of a powerful political dynasty, was in hospital Sunday undergoing a series of tests after suffering a seizure.

The 76-year-old liberal stalwart fell ill Saturday at his Kennedy family compound in the coastal town of Hyannis Port and was taken to a nearby hospital before being flown by helicopter to Boston's Massachusetts General Hospital.

The patriarch of the tragedy-scarred Kennedy clan is the last surviving brother of late president John F. Kennedy, assassinated in 1963, and Robert Kennedy, shot dead while campaigning for the presidency in 1968.

Kennedy's doctor said preliminary tests found he had not suffered a stroke and was not in "immediate danger," but the senator would undergo more evaluations over the next few days to determine what caused the seizure.

"He's resting comfortably and watching the Red Sox (baseball) game with his family," Larry Rosen, a primary care physician at Massachusetts General, said in a statement.

Kennedy's senate office said results of the tests would not likely be known until Monday.

The Boston Globe newspaper reported the Kennedy had suffered a seizure at home, and then another as he was being transported by helicopter.

The Cape Cod Times said he was conscious when emergency services first arrived at his home, a photograph on its website showed Kennedy on a stretcher being wheeled out to the helicopter, about two hours later.

According to the newspaper, Kennedy had undergone brain surgery in October to repair a blockage in a major neck artery, a common procedure to prevent a stroke.

Often called Ted or Teddy Kennedy was first elected to the Senate in 1962, making him the second longest serving senator after Robert Byrd of West Virginia. AFP

ROYAL WEDDING
Peter Phillips (R, in grey) and Autumn Kelly (L, later St George's Chapel in Windsor on May 17 after their marriage vows. The bride recently converted from Roman Catholicism to Anglicanism so that her husband, son of the Princess Royal, Princess Anne, will not have to renounce his right of royal succession. AFP

Bush tries to convince Arab skeptics on Mideast peace push

SHARM EL-SHEIKH, EGYPT—US PRESIdent George W. Bush sought to reassure skeptical Arabs on Sunday he is committed to securing a deal on Palestinian statehood before he leaves office, despite his scepticism support for Israel.

Wrapping up his Middle East tour in the Egyptian resort of Sharm el-Sheikh, Bush was looking to ease Palestinian dismay over his visit to Israel, where he lavished the Jewish state with praise, hailing it as a "homeland for the chosen people."

Bush planned to use a speech to Arab leaders at an economic forum in Sharm el-Sheikh on Sunday to insist that his "firmly believes" a Middle East peace deal can be reached this year—a deadline widely viewed as unrealistic.

"We must stand with the Palestinian people, who have suffered for decades and earned the right to a homeland of their own," Bush will say, according to an advance text of his speech.

Addressing his supporters from the one vacation during his visit to Israel last week to celebrate its 60th anniversary, Bush will challenge the Palestinians to "fight virtue" and call on Israel to make "tough sacrifices for peace and ease restrictions on Palestinians."

Bush was alluding to the hardship that Palestinians face from Israeli roadblocks and barriers in the occupied West Bank; measures they call collective punishment which Israel says are to defend it against militant attacks.

Bush's more sympathetic language on the Palestinians' plight appeared aimed at countering Arab doubts, reinforced by his Israel visit, about his ability—or act as an even-handed peace broker.

Bush will also use his speech to urge Arab leaders to cancel by Lebanese Prime Minister Fouad Siniora against Hezbollah and to endorse Iran over its nuclear program.

"Every powerful nation in the region has an interest in opposing Iran's nuclear weapons ambition," Bush will say. "To allow the world's leading sponsor of terror to gain the world's deadliest weapons would be an unforgivable betrayal of future generations."

With fewer than nine months left in office, Bush, highly unpopular in the Arab world because of the Iraq war, will lecture Arab countries on everything from economics to political reforms.

He will call on Arab governments to free all "prisoners of conscience" and open up political debate.

Reflecting US public concerns about high oil prices during a presidential election year, Bush will warn Arab oil producers that their suppliers are limited until they ease their economies.

In his customary follow-up visit to Saudi Arabia where he won a modest increase in oil output for world markets. High oil prices have stoked US economic fears. Reuters

Kuwaiti parliamentary polls close; economy tops agenda

KUWAIT—KUWAITIS VOTED IN A parliamentary election on Saturday that they hoped would bring to fresh faces able to bury political feuds and push through economic reforms.

Some 253 candidates were running for the 50-seat National Assembly, among them 27 women hoping to make their first success after failing to win a single seat in 2006.

By 5 p.m., about 51.4 percent of voters had cast their ballots, according to figures issued by state news agency KUNA. Polls closed as scheduled at 8 p.m.

Kuwait's ruler, Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad al-Sabah, dissolved parliament in March to end a standoff with the Cabinet that had delayed economic reforms aimed at tempering Kuwait for the era when its oil reserves run out.

Nearly 262,000 Kuwaitis, more than half of them women, were eligible to vote and polling got off to a slow start on a hot, dusty weekend.

Women won the right to vote and stand for office in 2005 but face an uphill struggle attracting votes in a Gulf Arab country where many still believe a woman's place is in the home. Reuters

Obama camp sees endgame in Oregon

WASHINGTON—BARACK OBAMA set his sights on November's general election Saturday as he campaigned in Oregon, where he hopes to deliver victory in the state for the Democratic presidential nomination.

Obama has said Tuesday's primaries in Oregon and Kentucky could mark the end of his drawn-out battle with rival Hillary Clinton, and his campaign pressed home that message by announcing a sprawling Republican nominee John McCain.

Iowa was the scene of the Illinois senator's first victory in the 2008 presidential nominating race, and his campaign noted Saturday is it "a critical general election state that Democrats must win in November." Polls show Obama leading in Oregon, where 52 delegates are up for grabs, while Clinton is ahead in Kentucky, a state with 51 delegates that has a similar demographic to West Virginia, where she won a thumping victory Tuesday.

His campaign says he needs just 27 more pledged delegates won through state votes to reach a majority of 1,627, not counting the "superdelegates," party officials who can vote either way at August's Democratic national convention.

Using a baseball analogy, Obama said May 6 that if after Tuesday's primaries "we have a majority of pledged delegates, which is possible, then I think we can make a pretty strong claim that we have got the most runs and (in the ninth inning and we have won."

The official finishing line is 2,025 delegates, including superdelegates.

During a rally in Roseburg, Oregon, Saturday, Obama promoted himself as the front-runner almost without question, attacking presumptive Republican nominee John McCain on foreign policy, the environment and healthcare.

Arriving Friday's historic race sparked by President George W. Bush's suggestion that Democrats seemed to appease terrorists, Obama said that not talking to North Korea and Iran had only made them more dangerous.

"I want everybody to be absolutely clear about this because George Bush and McCain have suggested that not being willing to sit down with our adversaries is a sign of weakness and sign of appeasement," he said.

He also attacked McCain's plan for a gas tax holiday to cope with rising pump prices, which Clinton supports, as well as his other environmental plans, saying the Republican had consistently opposed fuel efficiency standards.

"For him to come to Oregon as an environmental president, but his big strategy is to do more drilling and to have a gas tax holiday for three months, that's a phony solution," he said.

Pitching his message to Oregon's environmentally-conscious voters, Obama called on the United States to "lead by example" on global warming, and develop new technologies at home which could be exported to developing countries.

"We can't drive our SUVs and eat as much as we want and keep our homes on 72 degrees at all times ... and then just expect that other countries are going to say OK," Obama said.

"That's not leadership. That's not going to happen," he added.

The Illinois senator also argued that the differences between his healthcare plan and that of Clinton "pale in comparison to the differences we have with John McCain," whose proposals would only avert "if you're healthy and wealthy."

The underlying rhetoric between Obama and McCain has evoked the kind of campaign/matrix more common in the immediate run-up to an election—and emphasized further Obama's pole position in the Democratic race. AFP

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SPORTS
Editor Toddy S. Mendoza Assistant Editor Francis T.J. Ochoa

Viloria, Farenas triumph in Mexico

FORMER WBC LIGHT FLYWEIGHT champion Edcon "Mercado Fancy" Viloria and Filipino bomberweight Michael Farenas registered contrasting victories yesterday at the Plaza Monumental in Aguascalientes, Mexico.

Viloria notched his third win this year with a third round TKO win over Fred Hebrera Valdez.

Viloria looked shaky and was constantly on the attack, unloading a big left hand to the body that ended the bout at the 2:19 mark.

VILORIA

Farenas, a protege of WBO bantamweight king Jhonny Bedoya and Japanese Ryuske Thodes, took a unanimous decision win over Fermin de los Santos of Mexico in six rounds.

Farenas scored a knockdown in round three and the Mexican lost his scorefigure four times in the bout to the love of the Filipino's tormented attack.

Viloria raised his record to 22-2-0 with 11 KOs and is now looking forward to be back in the loop for title matches. Farenas improved to 21-3-2 with 18 KOs.

Rafaen L. Lagumbay, Contributor

UNDERSEIGE, 57KE: Leo Najorda of Red Bull attempts a reverse off Alaska import Kevin Holcomb during their Smart PBA Fiesta Cup game yesterday. Alaska won, 110-90. See story on A24 ANNA VALMONTE

GM Villamayor, Sadorra stretch winning streak

By Roy Luarca

SUBIC—GRANDMASTER BONG VILLAMAYOR AND INTERNATIONAL Master Julio Catalino Sadorra stretched their winning streak in the 1st Subic International Open chess championship Sunday.

The youngster Villamayor downed IM Quin Eamon valedar using one fastness handled International Master Ahmed Hoat as they led four other perfect scorers after two rounds of the $20,000 event at the Subic Bay Exhibition and Convention Center.

Also with 2-0 points are GM-elect Jayson Gonzales, IM Richard Bitoon, IM Zaw Moe Win of Myanmar and IM Sukhin Swasso of Indonesia.

The 13-year-old Sadorra, who'll be playing for De La Salle in the UNAP this year, was sure pawns up when Hoatad resigned after 72 moves of a Torre attack, giving Sadorra his sixth straight win since the Philippine Open, where he landed fourth.

The 15-year-old Villamayor, who assumed his playing career after two years of teaching chess in Singapore, forced Gomez to resign after 27 moves of a Taranch Defense to post the fourth straight win and stay on track of matching his 8th place effort in the Philippine Open.

Gonzales, who only needs to raise his 2400 Elo rating to complete his GM title, won three games up when Indonesian Hide Master Wisnu Amuse resigned after 46 moves of a King's Indian Defense.

Bitoon won over Indonesian Novita Aquiwa Wiyo bowed countermoves FM Liz Nuing Fernwhile Iowans drowned compatriot FM Kenneth Gorgo.

Trailing them with 1.5 points each were top-seeded Ukrainian GM Yuriy Bandzio, top Filipino hopes GMs Mesley So, Eugene Torre and Jerry Antonio, GM Vita Lay Zaw of Myanmar and GM Surono Wagiamto of Indonesia.

Also in the group were Filipinos IM Ronald Bonard and John Paul Gonzales, Malaysians IM Mahadhikul Idas, Sumeter Bik Aung Aung and On Jone Tun Nay, IM Roderick Wee, IM Oliver Barbosa, NM Rolando Seby, FIDE-mastered friends Dan Balleon and Indonesian WIM Irene Khotimah Sukandar.

The 14-year-old So, the world's youngest GM, drew with Barbosa, the 2004 national junior champion, after 56 moves of a Queen's Indian.

Another, who also became a GM at 14, rammed China's Hou Yifan to stay on track of the $5,000 champion pairs in the second-round event organized by the National Chess Federation of the Philippines.

A 29-year-old grandpa, Evan forced the point with Bf Rudy Dolfo while Antonio, playing out of the Philippine Army Special Group, pre-sailed over HM Alex Milagrosa.

Indelible Ink bags first TC jewel

JITTERY. Zarate and Medalla ink (right) hold off Shining Force to spirited duel down the wire/s. ANNA VALMONTE

By Florencio R. Cardilla

CARMONA, CAVITE—RESPONDING (up) under the whip and a sustained hand ride to the wire/s from jockey Alfred Zarate, Indelible Ink overtakes near the first jewel of the 2008 Triple Crown series by a neck before a roaring gallery at the San Lazaro Leisure Park here.

Indelible Ink lost the lead from a speed-starting Iron Dexter, handled by Jonathan Hernandez, as the field left the far turn before running back a strong finish by Shining Force under Jessie Guce to win out in the photo.

"I just felt she always closing in," Zarate told the barrister in Filipino. "At that time, it entered my mind that Iron Dexter was a possibility. But I could still feel the race. I just asked

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Big win anew for Big Brown

Routs Preakness field, nails second TC jewel

BALTIMORE—BIG BROWN CHARGED TO THE LEAD TURNING FOR HOME and then stretched down the stretch to win the Preakness on Saturday, still perfect and squarely pointed toward thoroughbred racing's First Triple Crown in 30 years.

Just as he did nine weeks ago in a Kentucky Derby that seemed to set the standard of Eight Belles, the colt named for GPS delivered another stunning win, this time by 5 1/4 lengths. Macho Again was second and Husband Game was third.

Big Brown broke from the middle of an undistinguished pack and jockey Kent Desormeaux took him off the pace. They ran third down the backstretch before tearing around the final turn and pulled away from the field.

"It was almost like the Kentucky Derby, but just not early," Desormeaux said.

As the Derby, Big Brown started on the far outside of 19 horses and used an explosive finishing kick to win by a 1/4 length, the tightest margin in his 5-0 career.

The bay colt joined Majestic Prince (1969), Triple Crown winners Seattle Slew (1977) and Sunny Jim Fitzsimmons (2004) as undefeated Derby and Preakness winners.

"He just keeps on getting better," trainer Rick Dutrow Jr. said.

Big Brown is the first 3-year-old since Sunny Jim to head for the Belmont Stakes with a triple try in play. The final leg of the Triple Crown will be held June 7. It's been 33 years since Affirmed swept the Derby, Preakness and Belmont to bag the Triple Crown.

Desormeaux didn't even need the whip on the stretch. he simply steered the reins to let Big Brown know it was time to take off. At various points, Desormeaux cradled his head under his right arm to check on the fading competition.

"I looked between my legs, under my arms, they were eight back," he said.

The victory put the sport's focus back on racing after two weeks of frenzied debate about safety and lawsuits following Eight Belles' catastrophic breakdown. The dominating performance came in front of a crowd that brushed aside after all 12 runners returned safely. On the same track just two years ago, Kentucky Derby winner Barbaro broke down early in the race.

The Preakness win also means Big Brown's connections—Dutrow, Desormeaux and principal owners Michael Iavarone and Richard Schiavo—who once worked on Wall Street...are headed back to their New York base with a horse that could make history. AP

KENT Desormeaux checks on the field as Big Brown heads to victory.

IT'S TWO down for jockey Kent Desormeaux and the triumphant Big Brown's connections.

Indelible Ink bags first Triple Crown leg

From page A1

hurt to give it her all."

Next off on the slight first pick over Don Hakim with sales of P679,229 out of the total daily double handle of P1,322,738, Indelible Ink Barbed has been where the situation demanded it.

True to form, Tim Yumul dominated the start of the 1,400-meters race but Zarate kept the winner within striking distance despite the dizzying speed of the colt, who gobbled up the first 800 meters in 47 seconds.

And closing the run for home when horses of lesser closeness would have folded up, Indelible Ink and Zarate put on a show that elicited a rousing applause afterwards.

Indelible Ink clocked 1 minute 39 seconds for the mile, broken down to 23", 23", 24" and 23", the same time turned in by the longshot Shining Force, also a colt, who definitely won't be overlooked by the bettors come the longer second leg next month.

Owner Hermie Esguerra, who won a TC leg for the third time after Magkait Mark (3rd leg, 2002) and Don Gaspard (1st leg, 2006), paid tribute to Zarate for a superb ride. "That jinete (el Don Nadal) made a solid finish possible."

There has never been a Triple Crown sweep since Silver Beau pulled off the sweet feat in 2001 and only one filly, the enigmatic Eva Dimen, was able to pocket all three jewels in the 21-year history of the Philippine Racing Commission's top event, doing it 19 years ago.

The win was worth P1.8 million as Indelible Ink upped her season gross to just over P2.3 million to overtake Don Enrico to top spot of that category.

Don Enrico lost for the first time in five starts this year.

Far Eastern seeks No. 5 vs Adamson

DAILY TIDBIT | The Oracle, San Jose

Fri 16—Hospital vs JSU

Fri 16—Cameron MP

Sat 10—FEU vs Adamson

Standings: Ateneo 6-1 (4-1 sets); FEU 5-2 (4-2 sets); La Salle 5-2 (4-2 sets); Adamson 5-2 (3-2 sets); UST 4-3 (3-3 sets); NU 3-4 (3-3 sets); UP 3-4 (3-3 sets); DLSU 2-5 (2-5 sets); UE 1-6 (1-6 sets); Ateneo 3-1 (3-0 sets); FEU 3-1 (3-0 sets); Adamson 2-2 (2-1 sets); UST 2-2 (2-1 sets); NU 1-3 (1-2 sets); UP 1-3 (1-2 sets); DLSU 0-4 (0-3 sets); UE 0-4 (0-3 sets)

Semifinals: Ateneo vs UP (8 a.m.); Adamson vs UST (10 a.m.); FEU vs NU (2 p.m.); DLSU vs UE (4 p.m.)

FAR EASTERN UNIVERSITY SHOOTS FOR a fifth straight win when it tackles Adamson University in the opener of another triple-header today in the 2nd Filoil Flying V Pre-Season Invitational Cup at The Arena in San Juan.

The Tamaraws, a win ahead of fifth San Beda in Group B, try to boost their quarterfinal bid to their 5-1 pair, share with the Falcons, who are running third in Group A at 3-2.

A victory today will move them in front in the race to the quarterfinals.

The Tamaraws are coming off a 69-54 win of NU while the Falcons tripped Perpetual, 69-63, in their previous game.

The winless Altas go up against the Jose Rizal University squad at 2 p.m. in this tournament backed by Total, Canopy Homes, Flying V Sheltered, Smart, Bench, Bayo, Metaflorine, Bull's Orion, CDG, Reyes Barbecue, Burlegrass, Chowking, Ecology Master Transport Specialist, Diamond Purified Water and Nike.

Aunzo, Ikeda anchor 2nd RP sweep

FERDIE AUNZO FIGURED UP HIS SECOND straight victory in as many weeks in Malaysia yesterday, firing a one-under par 71 to shoot a one-stroke win over Israel Nicholas Pung in the 24th Istana Amateur Open at the Nexus Golf Resort in Malaysia.

A week after scoring a runaway victory in the Kuantan Amateur Open over the same course, Aunzo battled back from two bogeys down this time with nines of 35-36 to hold off the rallying Pung.

Aunzo pounded up with a 213 total to edge Pung, who rallied with a three-under 69 for a 215.

Mohammad Imran also shot a 69 and gained a share of third with two-day leader Hank Fernando, who sizzled under pressure in the final round with a 75 to finish at 217.

Reigning PIP Ladies Open champion Chibi-an Ikeda completed another Philippine sweep as she came from nowhere to snatch the ladies crown with a 224 after a sizzling 69.

Ikeda posted a one-stroke victory over national champion Anya Tagaytay, who struggled with a 73 for a 225. Cyna Rodriguez fired a 76 and settled for third.

Clutch hits help Tams nail twin Nike hoops triumphs

FAR EASTERN UNIVERSITY SWEETENED two of its season sweep over intercollegiate opponents in the Nike Summer League basketball tournament late Saturday at the PSD Gym.

Jake Alinsu burned a three-pointer with 33 seconds left in the game and the Tamaraws downed a late rematch by University of the East to escape with a 72-69 victory.

The Tamaraws' victory was their seventh straight, completing a preliminary-round sweep of Group C and giving them passage in the quarterfinals.

In the women's division, Jocelyn Servañez's jumper with 2.8 seconds left in the game to give the FEU Lady Tams a 51-50 squeaker win over the RP Youth squad.

Cheri Borja scored 19 points to go with nine rebounds and four steals to lead FEU, but it was Servañez's clutch shot that sealed the Lady Tams' eighth consecutive win and pushed their unbeaten run in the quarterfinals.

In Juniors play, Ateneo closed the group stages with a perfect record after winning via default over Notre Dame.

SPORTSWATCH

La Salle spikers score

DE LA SALLE UNIVERSITY (LASALLE) IS second-seeds in the women's division yesterday after whipping University of Cordilleras, 25-17, 25-15, 25-22, to stay on top of the Inter-Collegiate volleyball championship at the Philsports Arena.

University of Santo Tomas bounced back from an opening-day to topping Adamson University, 25-17, 25-19, 25-19.

University of the Philippines defeated Philippine Women's University, 25-17, 25-19, 25-19, to extend its win.

In the men's side, the UP Fighting Maroons joined their women counterparts in the win column by whipping off Ateneo De Davao University, 25-19, 25-17, 25-13.

SJC hosts 'Flores De Mayo'

TOPNOTCH MODELING AND CASTING group today at San Juan Collegiate via the Flores de Mayo 6-mile derby, a three-day event with P1.2 million at stake.

Today's elimination round will harvest some 70 fights, said head Butch Bautista who pegged the derby fee at P11,000. The semi- and batch eliminations will be on also on Wednesday. 40 qualifiers will then step it out for the title on May 25.

Meanwhile, the Northern Dockers declaimed the Philippines 7-mile derby champs on May 26. For additional info: 7356389 and 7356865.

Makati derby today

NO LESS THAN P500,000 IN GUARANTEED prize will be dispatched today at Makati Coliseum's 8-mile derby, which will feature some 70 fights.

Pete Isor, standing member of the Press Cockfight Association of the Philippines will host the event. Entry fee is P11,000.

This event comes on the heels of last week's Big Event derby won by Eddie Boy of Batangas and Runner Kaol Pete from.

Meanwhile, preparations are under way for the 4th Anniversary 7-cock derby this June, with PT Arellano up for grabs. For inquiries: 8863644 and 8864875.

DOWN south, large crowds never fail to passionately rally behind their favorite football squads.

In Barotac Nuevo, 'beautiful game' is king

By Cudell P. Tupas, Contributor

BAROTAC NUEVO—THE PHILIPPINES played its first international football match here on a gloomy afternoon Saturday.

For some, though, there was a sense of normalcy about almost everything—the large turnout, the scene on the pitch and the prevailing feeling that in this side of the Philippines, football—the footballer, rare—is king.

The signs were everywhere. At 1:30 p.m., two hours before kickoff, the football plaza was already packed.

On the bill of the San Antonio Parish Church, which provides a brilliant panoramic view of the pitch and is considered "the best seats in the house," on the makeshift bleachers area, on the roof of nipa houses packed on the already crowded streets, the hordes of close to 8,000 people throbbed for the "beautiful game."

Philippine skipper Emelio Caligdong, the proud son of this town, activated feeling goosebumps as he trudged to the center half for the pre-game ceremonies.

Swelling with pride

"My heart was swelling with pride. The crowd was amazing," he told the locusts.

The game was extra special for Caligdong, who played on the same pitch where he learned to maximize the sport as kid.

"To lead the national team in an international match on the same place where I learned the game made the day very, very special."

That special feeling was not lost on defender Jarbel Bermejo and striker Ian Araos, products of the country's football capital, who teamed together with Caligdong for the Philippines in the match against Macau.

Somehow, Barotac Nuevo has found a way to repeatedly underline its tag as the football capital of the Philippines. Take the national team, for example. Aside from Caligdong, Bermejo and Araneta, there are other Barotac Nuevo natives in the national squad, namely, Jerson Bacle, Ricardo Bertis II and Sidney Llacuna.

Rich from the game early here, Barotac Nuevo football official Daily Barotacnia said. Drops a football on the field and put together a bunch of kids and chances are football dreamers make way for drills and tricks that honed footballers of yore.

So it was not surprising that the PP Blatter game Saturday was the hot topic in coffee shops, the public market, beer joints and on the streets a few hours after the match.

Everyone's a coach

"Everyone had an opinion about the game," Bermejo said. "If you're seeing outsiders coming here, you'd think that everyone is a football coach."

Football in Barotac Nuevo dates back to the 1920s when the Mendiri brothers, who were then studying at the Colegio de San Agustin (now University of San Agustin) in Iloilo City, introduced the sport. Through the years, the sport has evolved into the town's passion.

From the Tigbiknon Bisayan meets last Thursday that ushered the AFC Challenge Cup Qualifying Tournament drew a large crowd, may be beyond the prediction of officials.

A capacity crowd of 5,000 watched the Tridia beat Bhutan, 3-1. The same crowd estimate was registered when Macau and Bhutan played to a 1-all draw.

"The crowd was just well behaved, too," Bonavara added.

Buoyed by goals from Chad Gould and Phil Younghusband, the Philippines downed Bhutan, 5-0, in front of 5,000 fans on Sunday. Gould missed out on a berth in the AFC tournament due to goal difference.

But even in defeat, by the time the final chorus of what started out as a chanderson applause faded out, the RP football squad realized it still could find solace in this football loving town.

Lyceum in Final 4 as USLS nips USJ-R

By Norrine S. Acosta

UNIVERSITY OF ST. LA SALLE-BACOLOD dragged University of San Jose-Recoletos along for an early vacation, spoiling the Cobrams tenacious bid for a playoff berth with a 25-23, 25-20, 25-21, 25-13 win yesterday at the close of the quarterfinal phase of the Shakey's V-League Season 5 at The Arena in San Juan.

The win allowed idle Lyceum to join San Sebastian College, Adamson and Ateneo in the single-round robin semifinals starting tomorrow.

Had the Lady Jaguars won, they would have forged a knockout match with the Lady Pirates by virtue of the 2-1-0 tiebreaker.

The rare provincial squads finished their campaigns with similar 2-3 slates.

Esther, newcomer College of St. Benilde's 15th and final try finally produced a win, a 25-20, 25-18, 25-16 decision over UAAP champion Far Eastern University.

Both St. Benilde and FEU ended the quarters finals at 1-4.

The Bacolod spikers took the third and fourth sets behind the power-hitting duo of Ma'a Orendain and Sheryl Silva, who netted up with 24 and 11 points, respectively.

END-of-the-line for Michelle Bimbayan and the Lady Jaguars. CHUA BOLOMBOY

"We fought for points," said USLS coach Roger Bautista. "We don't want to go back to Bacolod on a losing note. We played our hearts out there."

After splitting the first two sets, the Lady Stingers seized ailment at will, stacking the Lady Jaguars' net defense.

Orendain highlighted her game-high effort with 12 kills. Kia Apiles also measured for 12 points, including four blocks.

LILLIA Cenon Gahan and game player Mechell Melegrito contributed for 25 points.

Anna Bartolina Mariano pounded out St. Benilde's offense with 12 points, while Cindy Velasquez added 10.

"It was a nice win; at least we did not go out with a zero mark," said St. Benilde coach Edwin Goyena, whose team dropped all its 15 matches in the elimination round.

"Our aim in the Shakey's V-League was worth 3 since our main goal was to get enough exposure and experience heading into the NCAA season," he added.

Alaska kids stay unbeaten via default

BAMBE ALASKA CALOOCAN PHOTO

Its third consecutive victory in the Burlington-Batang PBA Summer League without a hassle—literally—as Batang Pier Rocky Ilagan was a no-show in their scheduled date at the Marikina Sports Center.

The effortless victory kept the Batang Aces unbeaten in the 15-team tournament. They could complete a sweep of their elimination round campaign in Group A with a victory against Batang Tibs Lucio Marikina on Friday.

Batang Pier Rocky Ilagan fell to 0-3 after the league's governing committee forfeited the two games it was slated to play against Batang Tibs Lucio Marikina and Batang Gilas Angels for failing to field enough players in the 6-to-12 age group basketball tournament.

Batang Gilas Gerona Antipolo dumped Batang Tibs Lucio Marikina, 104-87, in the other Group A match also scheduled yesterday. Both teams are tied at 3-1. The Batang Kings close out their elimination round campaign on Wednesday against Batang Jet Pi Cainta (0-2).

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Celts, Cavaliers go for broke

PAUL Pierce: Can score great game. AFP

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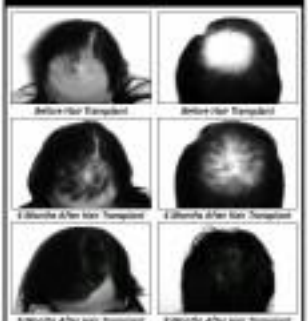

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MALDEN, Mass.—THE BOSton Celtics can drive by the statue of Red Auerbach on their way to work Sunday, pick up some lunch at Harvard Yard and then move up under the 16 NBA championship banners their predecessors helped hang from the rafters.

They're back home again, and that's been the surest sign of success for them so far in this year's playoffs.

"We're right where we want to be. We've got an opportunity to advance to the Eastern Conference finals," forward Paul Pierce said Saturday.

"That is the reason we got the best record in the NBA, Ivy," Pierce said. "We've got to play one more great game in order to advance."

The Celtics will host Cleveland on Monday at the new Boston Garden, where the green team has yet to lose in the postseason.

The winner meets the Pistons Tuesday night, in Boston if the Celtics win or in Detroit if the Cavaliers prevail.

The Celtics had a chance to end the series in Cleveland on Friday but lost, 74-68. Boston ended the regular season with an NBA-best 66-16 record. AP

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Roger, Rafa clash anew

ROGER Federer

HAMBURG, GERMANY—Roger Federer will play Rafael Nadal in the Hamburg Masters final again.

The top two players in the world set up a repeat of last year's showdown, when Federer won his fourth Hamburg title and ended Nadal's 81-match winning streak on clay—his only win over the Spaniard on the four surfaces.

They advanced in contrasting fashion Saturday.

The top-ranked Federer overwhelmed Andreas Beck, 6-2, 6-1, but Nadal had to fight more than three hours to turn back Novak Djokovic, 7-5, 2-6, 6-2.

Nadal's No. 2 ranking was at stake against Djokovic.

In Rome, Maria Sharapova joined the long list of players bobbing away from the Ivo Karlovic serve on Saturday. AP

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BUSINESS

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UCPB to receive ₱30-B shot in the arm

Bank officials await fresh cash infusion

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE BANGKO SENTRAL NG PILIPINAS HAS APPROVED a government plan to infuse P30 billion into United Coconut Planters Bank to ensure that the sequestered bank will survive a tougher banking environment.

The BSP's policy-making Monetary Board, in a meeting on Thursday, raised the amount of the cash infusion that the national government would soon extend to UCPB, top central bank sources said.

The government, which has been scrolling on the new UCPB program over the last few months, now supposed to provide only P25 billion.

Under the program, the government will place P30 billion in long-term deposits with UCPB. Proceeds from the deposit will then be used by the bank to invest in government securities. After a prescribed period, the funds will be returned to the government which, in turn, will again place the money with the central bank.

"We hope to get it very soon," UCPB president Ramon Ay said, referring to the fresh cash infusion.

But the Monetary Board did not approve other concessions sought by UCPB, such as exemption of the incoming government deposit from the reserve requirement.

For every P1 that banks accept as deposit, they are required to place 21 centavos in low-yielding, liquid assets with the BSP.

The sources said the BSP also vetoed parts of a business plan drafted by UCPB, such as the proposal to outsource loan management, or the sale of the insurance policies

(CONTINUED ON B2)

Sluggish trading seen ahead

TRADING EXPECT A lackluster week ahead on a dearth of market-moving news.

IN THIS ISSUE

- **When prices** don't tell all /B2
- **Bangko Sentral** posted net loss of P24.8B in Q1 /B5
- **Trade** imbalance with Japan worsens /B8

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When prices don't tell all

NO FREE LUNCH

Cielito F. Habito

WHAT IF YOUR FAVORITE NEIGHBORHOOD groceries advertises in posters all over town that it is selling regular-sized pan de sal for 50 centavos per even non-returnable piece? What if hundreds of unemployed troop to the store to stock up the bargain bread, only to be told that (1) there are only five dozen pieces available on that price per day, and (2) there is a 15 "flour surcharge" on top of the price, bringing the amount due to the buyer, NET included, to P2.88 (or P2.25 under the "free" deal) per pan de sal?

Would you be surprised if the crowd turns violent and attacks the bakery and its owners for the perceived deception?

Fly for free?

No one is attacking the domestic airline industry, thank God, yet this is exactly the strategy behind attractive and lurking PHP or even non-dollar fares to various points around the country. Or when the airlines offer seemingly generous "buy one take one" deals. You trying to the airline ticketing office with your hard-earned money hoping to snap up a great bargain, find that you have to line up for hours to get your turn at the ticket counter, and then discover that the "great bargain" is no bargain after all once fuel surcharges, insurance, taxes and other fees are considered.

Thus, I couldn't help feeling somewhat heartbroken when I recently overheard a couple of homemaids excitedly discussing their plan to take a short vacation back home in Mindanao after seeing one of those P99 fare ads. I didn't have the heart to tell them that it would really take one-to-two months' wages to pay for those P99 trips back and forth.

Sorry folks, but like sex economics always say, there's no such thing as a free lunch.

Like Meralco

Don't get me wrong, I am not against those fuel surcharges, taxes and other fees per se, to the extent that they are legitimate costs incurred by the airline. What I'm not in this way those charges are not included in the advertised prices, but only show up as a little "plus-plus" in the quoted line, when they are part of the usual costs of providing the service in the first place. Not only are we consumers misled; we are also left guessing whether part of the amounts being additionally charged of us are indeed legitimate costs, or simply additions to the company bottom line—point one against the customer. The current debates over Meralco pricing are no different. In our monthly electricity bills, most of us don't really understand exactly what we're paying for and whether we're being taken advantage of or not. Almost all this current headache.

My other lament is on how this pricing practice opens the way for depriving consumers of certain rights that they normally should have, by calling them "promotional" fares, the airlines find an excuse to make the tickets non-refundable, non-changeable and non-transferable. But how unusual are these fares really? It seems to me the bulk of their sales are made on the basis of those "promo" fares, while "full fare" is more the exception than the rule.

"Plus-plus"

What exactly goes into the "plus-plus"? I tried a comparative analysis online of lowest price quotes given by the local carriers for the same destination on the same dates and approximately same time (say, October/November from 25-27). A proper comparison between all-in-one tickets is not to be expected. Do, as the airlines mimic the components differently, and give varying levels of access to the information on their booking websites—point two against the consumer.

You can count 'bare' out on transparency: you can't even get any price information at all before you enter your full ideas. Cebu Pacific offers (a) P5,000 fare to Caticlan and P7,000 back, plus P1,170 for "fuel and insurance" each way, (plus P73 evidently for us in the trip back, plus 12 percent VAT, adding up to P4,933 for the round trip. Asian Spirit offers P5,099 fare each way plus P258 insurance and P1,020 surcharge each way, plus P15 aviation security fee on the trip back, for a total of P4,755 (NOT half) (c) Philippine Airlines offers a fare of P5068 each way, plus a lump sum P3,810 "taxes," for a total of P9,986. I guess we can assume the "taxes" here really include the fuel surcharge and insurance costs, but somehow, the impression is conveyed that this portion is beyond PALs hands.

Questions

All these lead us to ask: Shouldn't our regulators (the Civil Aeronautics Board in this case) require all advertised fares to be all-in-cluster and transparent, like what the US Department of Transportation and other governments now require of their airlines? Shouldn't the CAB fully disclose to the consuming public the exact nature and composition of fuel surcharges, insurance and security costs and other fees that they permit airlines to charge them on? And in the same way that "no return-no exchange" is now prohibited among common merchants, shouldn't "nonrefundable/nonchangeable/nontransferable" clauses in airline fares be tightly restricted as well, if not outright prohibited? I always thought together we exist to protect, first and foremost, the interest of the general public. Shouldn't the CAB be doing the same?

Comments welcome at chabito@inquirer.com.ph.

SMC group eyes controlling stake in BOC

By Elizabeth Sanchez-Lazaro

SAN MIGUEL CORP IS LOOKING AT ITS creating its 34-percent interest in Bank of Commerce to gain a controlling stake, company president Ramon Ang said.

Ang said the San Miguel group wanted to acquire a controlling stake in the bank to support the projects of its property arm, San Miguel Properties Inc. (SMPI).

SMPI and SMC Infrastructure Plan earlier invested P5 billion in Bank of Commerce in exchange for a 34-percent stake in the bank, which will pave the way for a strategic alliance that would support SMPI's aggressive expansion into the property segment.

Bank of Commerce is led by Antonio "Sonny" Tuviera, a former director of San Miguel chair Eduardo "Danding" Cojuangco.

SMPI plans to spend between P6 billion and P7.5 billion for the initial development phase of its first resort project next year on 20 hectares lot in Boracay.

SMPI is currently doing due diligence on the property owned by Boracay Property Holdings Inc. (BPHI), one of the resort's owners on the island. BPHI is led by its chair Demetrio Demeterio and president Mariano Antonio Jr., recent documents with the Securities and Exchange Commission showed.

SMPI officials said the company hoped to close a deal on the Boracay property this year with BPHI.

"This is our first leisure-related huge-scale venture. Once we close the deal, we hope to start construction by next year," SMPI president Jonathan Ellapen said.

Ellapen also said the project was seen to take advantage of growing tourist arrivals and the excellent high-end property market.

The Boracay project involves the conversion of a five-star hotel, a condominium and golf.

Lots in Boracay sell for P3,000 to P10,000 per square meter using sources said.

SMPI is earmarking between P4 billion and P5 billion for residential and mixed-use projects this year and 2007.

SMPI also earlier signed a 6-year agreement with the Government Service Insurance System (GSIS) to put up a P1.7-billion luxury condominium-hotel project in Makati. It will be put up on a 1,766-square meter property owned by the GSIS near Greenbelt 1 in Legaspi Village.

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RP, Canada sign air rights deal

Major victory for Clark airport

By Rizz T. Olchondra

CLARK INTERNATIONAL Airport Corp. (CIAC) secured a major victory for Diosdado Macapagal International Airport (DMIA) by bagging a deal for unlimited all-cargo flights between Clark and Canada with fifth freedom rights thrown in.

"It is very positive for Clark. Canada recognized the future of DMIA as a logistics hub so it is going to grant liberal all-cargo rights between Clark and Canada with fifth freedom rights," CIAC president Victor Jose Lazatin told the business in a text message shortly after the completion of the RP-Canada cargo-air talks in Vancouver during the weekend.

Under the agreement signed at the meeting, the two countries will allow at least one flight daily with no capacity limit.

As much as 200 tons of cargo can be flown daily by the airlines of both countries. They can also lift mail, clothes, cargo coming from a third country, under fifth freedom rights.

CIAC has long anticipated cargo growth in Clark, which is being positioned as a logistics hub. Clark's DMIA is preparing to develop an P6.5-billion cargo complex in anticipation of an increase in both cargo and passenger volumes.

The proposed area for Terminal 2 would have ancillary facilities, including ramp, parking, express and general freight facilities and heavy aircraft maintenance area.

There should also be a cargo terminal, especially in anticipation of the entry of big aircraft. Terminal 2 will have the runway and air bridges for that, and the cargo terminal beside it will take care of the cargo.

Clark's agreement with Canada adds momentum to the government's thrust to draw more cargo traffic through the Philippines in spite recent business for airlines, multi-modal logistics providers, small cargo players and allied businesses such as aircraft repair.

In April 2008, Singapore Airlines Engineering Co. (SIAEC), part of the Singapore Airlines Group that provides maintenance services to Singapore's Changi Airport, said it was planning to infuse $100 million into a project involving the setting up of a world-class aircraft repair facility at the DMIA complex.

The Philippines is also gearing for duty-free cargo liberalization.

The government scrutinized BA and Pacific Star Asia Cargo Airlines as the country's official carriers under an Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean) memorandum of agreement for liberalized airfreight services.

The Civil Aviation Board (CAB) said in May 2007 that the memorandum allowed designated airlines of each Asean member to operate all-cargo services up to 100 runs weekly with no limitation on frequency and aircraft type.

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Sights and Sounds

Aussie miner hikes investment in Didipio project

By Ronald W. Domingo

AUSTRALIAN miner OceanaGold Corp. announced it had increased its investment in the Didipio project in Nueva Vizcaya to $160 million from $135 million, as it decided to build its own power plant to ensure electricity supply for its operations.

In a statement, OceanaGold chief executive Bruce Orr said that following the completion of an access road to the area late last year, the company reviewed the project and looked for ways to reduce risk.

"After a number of studies, we decided to incorporate a heavy fuel oil power plant to the project scope so that we can generate our own power," Orr said.

"Having reliable power is critical to a successful mine and we felt that the national power grid would not be dependable," he added.

Also, OceanaGold decided not to push through with a 6.2-kilometer drainage tunnel on the underground "following hydrological test work that confirmed we could manage water by increasing pumping capacity."

Orr said the increase in capital expenditure also covered the engagement of a contractor, higher commodity prices for inputs like steel and fuel, increased freight costs, increased labor costs and allowances for foreign exchange fluctuations against the US dollar.

"The contingency was then tripled in

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Ortigas to spend ₱15B for mixed-use project

12-ha Quezon City property to be developed

By Dustin L. Lucas

PROPERTY DEVELOPER Ortigas & Co. recently unveiled a major mixed-use real estate project, signaling a major shift in strategy for the conservative firm and hoarding a generous slowdown in the sector this year.

In a press briefing, Ortigas & Co. chief operating officer Jose Emilio G. Araneta II said the company would spend as much as ₱15 billion over the next decade to develop a 12-hectare property in Quezon City.

The project, dubbed Aqua Verde Ortigas, will rise at the end of Calle Industria, along the Marikina River and a stone's throw away from the Eastwood City complex of Megaworld Corp.

Company officials unveiled the Aqua Verde project would be "unequalled" by other community developments like Eastwood, the Lopez group's Bonifacio complex or the Fernandez project of Ayala Land Inc.

We will have the lowest density in terms of floor area ratio (FAR)," Ortigas said.

FAR measures allowed floors of a certain project as a percentage of its total land area. A lower FAR represents lower living area density which allows a property firm to charge a premium for the project.

The company said the Aqua Verde project would have a FAR of four, compared to five for Bonifacio, eight for Eastwood, and as high as 11 for Eastwood.

Ortigas added that the entire make-selling point of the project was its "value for money" price, as it would be selling it for an average of ₱80,000 per square meter, or lower than the price tags for similar developments.

A total of 5,000 units would be sold for the entire project, and the first of four phases will be launched later this year.

More importantly, Ortigas said the project represented a shift in strategy for the firm once it would be to first venture into mixed-use communities developments.

Included in this strategy, he said, was the "long-term redevelopment of Ortigas Center," which would see several new projects rise on vacant lots within the central business district.

Ortigas said the redevelopment would also be "master-planned" by urban planning consultant RTKL, potentially addressing a longstanding weaknesses of the country's second largest central business district.

He also said RTKL enters the process of completing plans for a new Greenhills Shopping Center that would be launched before the end of the year.

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Security Bank first-quarter profit rises by 10.3% to ₱835M

MEDIUM-SIZED LENDER SECURITY Bank Corp. posted a 10.3-percent rise in first-quarter net profit over a year ago despite a decline in securities trading gains caused by rising interest rates.

The bank reported a net income of ₱835.7 million for January to March, up from ₱757.7 million over year-ago level, defying the slump seen by most banks due to lower treasury gains during the quarter.

This resulted in a return on equity (ROE) of 25.6 percent, which means that for every P1 put in by shareholders, the bank yielded about 25 centavos. The ROE improved from 22 percent as of end-December.

"We are able to consistently deliver high ROE from a series of synergic initiatives commenced five years ago to drive shareholder value. It is a convergence of programs to streamline the business that has been generating incremental ROE year-on-year and will continue to sustain growth and profitability," SBC president Alberto Villarosa said.

Revenue rose by 3.6 percent while net interest income, which stood at ₱1.1 billion, was slightly higher than year-ago level. The 42.7-percent increase in loans to ₱48.7 billion over a year ago attributed a 31.1-percent rise in interest earnings from loans and receivables over the same period. Other income reached ₱1.2 billion, 9.6 percent higher year-on-year.

Although securities trading gains dipped by 12.3 percent to ₱900.1 million, increases in foreign exchange gains and service charges contributed to the positive growth.

When interest rates are rising, the price of bonds swells in need to lower yields declines, resulting in capital depreciation for the investor.

Pending rates were managed, allowing a 3.6 percent decline in interest expense. Operating expenses amounted to ₱982.8 million net of provisions and impairment related expenses, reflecting a moderate growth of 8 percent over the same period last year. — Doris C. Dumlao

Bangko Sentral posted net loss of ₱24.8B in Q1

Earnings not enough to cover huge forex loss

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE BANGKO SENTRAL NG Pilipinas reported a net loss of ₱24.8 billion for the first quarter, about six times the losses recorded in the same period last year.

Based on its latest unaudited financial statement, the BSP generated a much higher operational income of ₱5.68 billion from January to March, versus the ₱1.07 billion a year ago, as the growth in revenue outpaced the increase in expenses.

However, the growth in operational income was not enough to cover the foreign exchange losses incurred in a bid to temper the appreciation of the peso.

The BSP said foreign exchange losses in the first quarter reached ₱28.4 billion, much higher than the ₱3.16 billion in forex losses incurred a year ago, as the peso gained ground against the dollar for most of the first quarter.

In the first quarter of 2007, the BSP registered a net loss of ₱4.09 billion.

The central bank, which has a "long" (buy) position on US dollars, given its rising stock of gross international reserves, books losses when the local currency is appreciating. As of end-March, the BSP has accumulated $36.6 billion in GIR.

Starting March, however, the peso's appreciation was halted by combined risk aversion caused by rising inflation in Asia as well as a looming US-led global slowdown. Last Friday the peso closed at 41.00, down 3 percent weaker than the end-2007 level of 41.28 against the dollar.

For the first quarter, the BSP's revenue rose by 60.5 percent to ₱22.80 billion from year-ago level. Expenses rose 45.2 percent to ₱16.13 billion. Interest expense increased by 2.32 percent to ₱16.61 billion over a year ago. The situation of incurring losses due to foreign exchange fluctuations, however, is not unique to the BSP. In a recent presentation to Congress, the BSP cited the following:

- Norway's central bank Norges Bank recorded net losses of NKr 4.7 billion and NKr 24 billion in 2001 and 2002, respectively.
- Bank of Thailand incurred net losses of Bt 1.7 billion and Bt 102.3 billion in 2005 and 2006, respectively. It is now in consultation with government agencies regarding its capital level and rules on profit distribution.
- Bank of Korea incurred net losses of 3.9 trillion and 1.8 trillion won in 2005 and 2006, prompting the government to assume 20 trillion won worth of treasury bonds for the stabilization of the foreign exchange market in 2006.

The BSP however, will soon get ₱98 billion in fresh capital infusion from the national government, which will create a special purpose trust that shall raise the funds through bonds payable in 10 years.

Trade imbalance with Japan worsens

Imports outpaced exports in first quarter, data show

By Roland N. Dorotheo

THE BALANCE OF TRADE BETWEEN the Philippines and Japan remained elevated in favor of the world's second largest economy as of end-March this year.

Philippine merchandise exports to Japan grew 4.5 percent to $2.24 billion in the first quarter as Tokyo signed with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations a comprehensive economic partnership agreement in March.

But according to the Japan External Trade Organization, data from the Monetary of Finance showed that the Philippines' imports from Japan increased 9.1 percent to $2.74 billion.

Japan's surplus in trade with the Philippines has reached about $233 million or more that double the $111 million recorded in the first quarter last year.

From January to March, shipments from the Philippines accounted for 1.2 percent of Japan's total imports valued at some $197.2 billion.

Also, Japan's merchandise exports sent to the Philippines accounted for 1.3 percent of Japan's total exports of some $197.2 billion.

For the month of March alone, exports to Japan increased by 7.8 percent to $812.2 million, while imports from Japan grew at a faster pace of 8.7 percent to $861.2 million.

In March, Japan's trade surplus with the Philippines reached $49.3 million or about four times the level in March 2007.

Meanwhile, Undersecretary Emmanuel Esguerra is expected to increase with the signing of the AJCEP.

In a statement dated April 14, Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said the AJCEP signing was "completed by authorized ministers in the capitals of respective countries."

"As a next step, Korea member states and Japan will start their respective domestic procedures necessary for the entry into force of the agreement and notify their completion of such domestic procedures to the other countries," MOFA said.

The AJCEP pact covers trade in goods, trade in services, investment, and economic cooperation as well as provisions for the elimination of tariffs on 90 percent of goods within 10 years.

Tokyo touts the AJCEP as being expected to "provide a strong impetus for further invigoration of trade and investment in the region."

Meanwhile, the Japan-Philippines Economic Partnership Agreement continues to await for action by the Senate.

TAIPAN ANDREW TAN NAMED MODEL EMPLOYER
President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo gives Megaworld chair and CEO Andrew Tan the Gawad Likas ng Kabisayan award during the 29th National Conference of Employers, organized by the Employers Confederation of the Philippines (Ecop), on May 15 at the Manila Hotel. Witnessing the awarding are (left) Ecop chair Miguel Varela and (right) Ecop president Sergio Ortiz-Luis Jr.

Pinoys in US cash in on ripe mangoes

By Abigail L. Ho

NEW YORK — THE FILIPINO DIASPORA HAS always been known the world over for its mangoes, which should explain why these sweet golden fruits are raking in the big bucks for Filipinos doing business here in the Big Apple.

Josephine Montero, trade representative at the Consulate General of the Philippines here, said the country's biggest cash crops were mangoes and pineapples.

"Our dried mangoes are also considered the best here, with most big chains carrying only brands from the Philippines. People usually buy only Philippine-branded dried mangoes," she said in an interview.

She said frozen mangoes also sells well here, even if it costs more than the frozen milkfish from other countries.

This fish product is so popular, in fact, that suppliers sometimes could no longer keep up with the demand, she related.

Another hit in the Filipino food product market are the local packed sauces — the pre-mixed ones that lend just the right zing to home-cooked stir-grills or just the right garlic-onion sauce on anything sautéed.

The Philippine Consulate here is constantly to promote the country not just as a source of delicious mangoes and pineapples, but also as an investment destination.

Consul General Cecilia Sebung said the consulate was focused on getting more business persons concerning them to the United States to set up shop in the Philippines.

"We're promoting the BPO and the (information technology) industries since we're very strong there. We're actually set up the Philippine Business Outsourcing Council, which conducts forums to encourage investment to invest in the Philippines," she said.

Sebung said the consulate was already doing business in the Philippines because our speakers and share their experiences. There provide potential investors with actual testimonials from the people who have actually set up businesses in the country," she added.

She said the consulate was also pushing tourism.

"We're really working hard to promote the Philippines to people here. We encourage 35 Filipinos here to do 'balik-probinsya' (back-to-the-province) tours," she said.

"We're also promoting retirement to the Philippines to our Kababayans who are based here," she said.

LRWC plans to invest in P3-B airport

By Elizabeth Sanchez-Lazaro

FIRST CAGAYAN LEISURE AND Resort Corp., the gaming subsidiary of Cagayan-based Lucio Tan-controlled gaming firm Leisure and Resorts World Corp. (LRWC), will invest in an international airport in the Cagayan free port, which is estimated to cost roughly P3 to P4 billion.

LRWC president Alfredo Abelardo Benitez said the investment would be on up-to-date to 70-hectare property in Sta. Ana in joint venture with the Cagayan Economic Zone Authority.

Air traffic to and from the Cagayan free port is currently serviced at the Navy-owned airstrip in Sta. Ana, which can accommodate jets with 30 to 40 passengers.

The proposed airport is now unfolding in the further growth of the economic zone.

CEZA is mandated by law to manage the Cagayan Special Economic Zone and Free Port (CSEZFP), and has in fact authorized First Cagayan to oversee, regulate and supervise the operations of registered online gaming companies in Cagayan Free Port.

First Cagayan, on behalf of CEZA, can issue two types of licenses: Interactive gaming licenses which cover all types of online gaming including casinos, bingo, slots, sports books and restrictive licenses that limit the offerings to sports betting only.

As the master licensee, First Cagayan is entitled to half of the gaming levy imposed by CEZA on the gaming operators in Cagayan Free Port.

First Cagayan generated P80.4 million in gross revenues for the first quarter of 2008, a 42.9 percent increase from P55.3 million in the first quarter last year.

Use San Roque dam for irrigation, gov't urged

NEW YORK — FORMER PRESIDENT Fidel Ramos is pushing for the use of the 345-megawatt San Roque Multipurpose Dam in Pangasinan and Benguet for irrigation which, he says, can help alleviate the rice supply problem that the country is currently undergoing.

Speaking before the Consulate General of the Philippines here last Thursday, he said the dam was built for power generation and irrigation, but the irrigation aspect had yet to be used.

"The problem is our own internal politics and bickering," the former general in the highbrack. This has contributed to the hesitation of Japan to release the (official development assistance) money for the project that **should have been available** two to four years ago," he said.

"The irrigation part hasn't been operating, even if the water has always been there. The original plan was for San Roque to cover an area of 87,000 hectares, with an upstream lake of 17 kilometers. This could have been used not just for irrigation but also for fish farming and tourism purposes," he related.

"The water has been there since 2003, yet the government never made any decisive action. And to think the agriculture secretary was also presidential adviser on northern Luzon. If he had acted sooner, there we would most likely not be having this rice crisis," he added.

Despite this lack of foresight, he said the Philippines was still doing "okay" in the rice department, and **that the supposed rice crisis was** merely a rice "shortage" that could still be addressed, Abigail L. Ho

Aussie miner hikes ...

Front page B4

$33 million in excess that we were anticipated issues such as adverse weather," Ong said. "In 20 years in this business, I have never seen an inflationary environment such as this."

"We are fortunate to have an economically robust deposit at Bulkpin and it is still an attractive and important project for us," he added. "The key is to get Bulkpin commissioned as soon as possible."

The company projects to be able to start commissioning of the project in the first half of 2009.

OceanaGold has so far invested $40 million in Bicliple and has some $100 million in cash on hand.

"We are well down the track on some debt financing options and my needs over the debt financing will be equity with priority given to our loyal shareholders," Ong said.

DA sets aside P90M to promote root crops

By Amy R. Remo

THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE has earmarked at least P90 million for the National Roots-rops Planting Program, a three-year scheme to increase the consumption of root crops.

According to the DA, the government was looking into the vast potential of these root crops such as cassava, sweet potato, yam and taro to alleviate poverty and hunger.

Production of these crops have been found to be rich in beta-carotene, biotin (B7), minerals and micronutrients, while others are known to have anti-hypertensive and antidiabetic properties.

These crops can also be processed into various products.

To be launched later this month, the National Roots-crops Planting program is geared toward the nationwide production and propagation of these crops.

With this program, the DA said it targets to "improve the seed supply of these root crops, improve productivity in planting areas and increase the consumption and commercial utilization of root crops through changed food habits and processing technology adoption."

The DA disclosed that some agribusiness corporations were already looking into root crops as sources of starch/carbohydrate raw materials.

DA documents showed that the bulk of the three-year budget or about P60 million would be used for the mass propagation of clean, virus-free planting materials of bitter cassavas.

The rest of the funds would go to general development, capacity building for stock operators as well as a seed fund; and provision of training, technical assistance, other capacity building activities to disseminate information and new technologies.

To effectively implement the program, the DA has tapped agricultural research centers, state universities and colleges as well as local governments units to be part of the root crop production program.

The agriculture department added that it had already arranged the planting dates and locations for certain crops.

The planting for sweet potato, for instance, has been set for October to 31 January in areas of Central Luzon; April to May in Batanes; and November to January and May in Aurora, Visayas and Mindanao.

As for cassava, the DA will have it planted from April in Aurora in commercial areas, and all year round for the rest of the planting areas.

Yam will be planted in April and May while taro will be planted from December to February in designated commercial areas and year round for the rest of the planting areas.

Franchising industry unfazed by rising prices

SUSTAINED CONSUMER SPENDING and the tourism boom are seen driving further growth in the franchising industry despite skyrocketing prices of food and fuel, according to the Philippine Franchise Association.

PFA chair Angelo S. Limjoco said increases in the prices of commodities had little or no effect on the industry's growth.

He said franchising has become a way for entrepreneurs, budding enterprises, and established small and medium enterprises that are looking for lucrative but stable businesses with long-term prospects for growth and reputation.

He said the country's improved economy and the bright prospects over the short and long term could even make 2008 a banner year for franchising.

Limjoco said the sector has been growing steadily P10.5 billion, up 25 percent from 2006. Roland M. Dorotheo

UCPB to receive P30-B shot in the arm

From page B1

through bank branches.

The assistance package approved for UCPB is different from the financing scheme earlier extended to the bank and other large institutions. Instead of the BSP lending to the state-owned Philippine Veterans Bank Corp., which is supposed to provide funding, the government itself will provide assistance to the bank.

The framework for this new assistance has been cleared by the Department of Justice, whose only requirement was for the BSP's police-making board to approve the scheme.

The government has taken it upon itself to help UCPB because the bank is virtually the responsibility of the state—about 78 percent of its shares are under sequestration.

Although it is considered the consolidated ownership claims, UCPB is under pressure to shore up capital due to more stringent accounting and capital adequacy requirements. Until the ownership issue is resolved and the legitimate owners can put in money, the bank can do little to raise funds outside other banks.

The bank has been the subject of a long-running scandal dispute involving coconut farmers and businessman Eduardo Cojuangco, a close associate of the Marcos family. Most of the bank's shares had been sequestered by the Presidential Commission on Good Government after Ferdinand Marcos was ousted from power in 1986.

In 2003, the government provided at least P20 billion to cash advances to UCPB through the PDIC.

The assistance was prompted by heavy deposit withdrawals, following a Supreme Court ruling that the coconut levy funds used to put up the bank were public money.

UCPB has since pared down its debt with the PDIC and is renegotiating the terms of the remaining amount.

Established in 1963 as a commercial bank, UCPB grew to become the first private Philippine universal bank in 1981, enabling it to invest in non-allied businesses.

Sluggish trading

From page B1

Analysts said first quarter earnings of blue-chip stocks last week were mixed, leaving room for double-or-lose badly inflation had affected corporate profits.

"Investors will remain wary in the coming days, with concerns still on oil prices and other issues involving the government and some of the listed companies," AB Capital Securities wrote in a weekly note to investors. "What will definitely be on the lookout for improvements in the US and Asian markets."

AB Capital also said that there would be no major

Front page B1

lyn "that would move the market" this week.

"Although sentiments appear to be positive for the short term, we strongly doubt that such optimism can be translated for the longer term," AB Capital said.

Campos Lanuza & Co. said in its daily commentary that the market would trade within a narrow range of 2,700 and 2,900.

"The sell possibly see a more solid trend in the second quarter, which may or may not confirm fears of how rising inflation will affect earnings," Campos Lanuza said. Elizabeth Sanchez-Lazaro

INFOTECH

Glam netbook for the working woman

By Raquel P Gervasi

IN THIS DAY AND AGE, TECH HAS finally taken notice of the powerful purchasing power of women.

Asus Philippines demonstrated this assertion during the launch of its ultra mobile PC (UMPC), the EeePC 900, which featured women models, or corporate gals on heels, parading the pearl white devices in big and shoulder bags.

As if the message wasn't resonant enough, more pretty models clad in short, jagged-cut suits the various ultrals carrying the EeePC 900—stopping only for a break to check their emails.

Although not an ipod that can make any woman feel cool while jogging to work, the Asus EeePC 900 pretty much does the job, allowing women to carry on with work or perform any PC activity, like online shopping, in style—something Asus officials have been trying to get across.

The EeePC 900, which is an upgrade or a "makeover" of Asus' successful EeePC 701, has more gloss and shiny finish this time, the keyboard and LCD screen are bigger, and the applications are better.

As a UMPC, the EeePC 900 doesn't much deviate from the other UMPCs in the market that target users who only wish the most and bare essentials of a laptop.

Its features focus mainly on browser functions, such as emails and Web social networking, plus office functionalities like the real deal of the devices more inside. One can find a 900 MHz Intel Celeron-M processor, a 1 gig DDR II memory, an Intel GMA display card, a built-in Wi-Fi, and bigger storage capacities...a checkpoint 12 gigabyte and 20 gigabyte solid state disk (SSD) for Microsoft Windows XP and Linux OS formats respectively.

The EeePC 900 also incorporated a brighter and wider display of 8.9 inches that can offer resolutions of 1024 x 600.

It has a 1.3-megapixel webcam and a new innovative "Fingerglide" feature on a multi-touch pad that allows for easy and convenient operation of the device.

For example, a simple glide of two fingers on the sensitive touchpad will immediately scroll pages up or down, or make images zoom in and out, a feature which is somewhat similar to Macbook Air's.

The EeePC 900 Microsoft version offers applications such as the Windows Live (apps to get online) that includes the Windows Live Messenger and Windows Live Mail (to consolidate email accounts on the desktop), and the Windows Live Present (for putting up Groundit).

For office productivity needs, it features the Microsoft Works 9, which is an integrated application that already has Word, Excel, and Money (Sunny Money).

As it doesn't have an optical drive, the EeePC 900 offers an SD/MMC card reader and three USB 2.0 ports. It has a VGA out, earphone jack, a microphone and two speakers, which used to be located more the display to the old model, but is now relocated behind the netbook's lower lid.

For a computing device that is light enough (.90 kg) and small enough (22.5 cm x 17 cm) to fit snugly inside a shoulder bag, the EeePC 900 can be both the functional office tool and the perfect accessory for the working women.

Both Microsoft and Linux versions of the EeePC retail at P34,995.

Kodak V1073: Snapping pics made easy with touch-happy device

By Riza T Olchondra

SURE, DIGITAL CAMERAS ARE FUN ...even more so with Smart Capture mode and a touchscreen, both of which are packed in the Kodak V1073.

According to Kodak, the camera incorporates 10 megapixels and a 3x zoom, all-glass Schneider-Kreuznach Variogon lens with a big sensor 1/1.63 inch CCD).

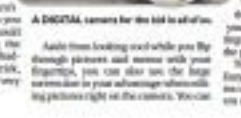
Huh? All it means is that the camera takes sharp, detailed pictures worthy of blogs, print publication, and even poster-size enlarging.

Impressive is the lens measure for the size, though, and the Kodak V1073 passes with flying colors.

Shaky hands? The camera has optical image stabilization for steadier pictures.

Don't want to worry about settings, what to focus on, and so on? Smart Capture mode is activated by default so that the camera can decide the settings for you, even compensating for backlighting or composition that say "against the light." The only downside to this is that manually setting saturation and such seems to tedious now once you do it.

Slightly near-sighted? The camera's 3-inch format LCD touch screen lets you see what you're shooting at. You could have a bit of a problem viewing the screen under direct sunlight, but dealing with your hand should do the trick, unless you are bombarded with very bright light from all directions.



A DIGITAL camera for the kid is all of us.

Aside from looking cool while you flip through pictures and menus with your fingertips, you can also use the large screen size to your advantage when editing pictures right on the camera. You can crop pictures or add graphic and sound tags.

Want to show off pictures on a TV screen? The Kodak EasyShare V1073 records captures HD-quality pictures in 16:9 format, it allows you to view your pictures in HD TVs or electronic photo frames using an HD interface.

A bit of advice: If you want to view your V1073's HD pics on a widescreen HDTV, you have to take the pictures with 7.1 megapixels (yes, you can adjust this in the camera settings) but this will lessen the liveliness of the pictures a bit.

You can use the optional Kodak EasyShare HDTV dock to view your photos on your HDTV. As for video, the users can playback HD video at 720p and 1080i resolution.

The camera also captures HD quality videos with MPEG-4 compression, with longer video capture time. It takes some figuring out that you need to press on the "shot" button repeatedly to bring out the video capture mode, so better read your manual before starting.

After that, it's a breeze. You can even take out some frames after capturing the video.

As for battery time, the camera lags about two hours of charging when it comes out. It can tolerate being turned on/off, taking 300 shots or so, and capturing about five minutes of video for about four hours.

All in all, it is one cool experience to have a touchscreen camera like the Kodak V1073.

CAUTIOUS OPTIMISM

Wall Street finally sees light at end of the tunnel

PSALM
Power Sector Assets & Liabilities Management Corporation

INVITATION TO BID

The Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corporation (PSALM) Privatization, Bids and Awards Committee (the "Committee") invites interested parties to participate in and bid for the privatization of the Undang.

The 620 MW Limay Combined Cycle Power Plant located in Limay, Bataan

(the "Asset"). The Asset is being privatized on an "as is where is" basis.

Interested parties must submit a Letter of Interest ("LOI") to the Committee which shall state the full name, address, telephone and fax number of the interested party, name of the principal contact, and signature of an authorized representative. All LOIs must be received by the Committee at the PSALM Office with address at the 7th Floor Bonifacio Building, EDSA Ayala Avenue, Makati City, not later than **5:00 p.m. on 30 May 2008** (the "LOI Submission Deadline"). Only interested parties that submit an LOI by the LOI Submission Deadline shall be allowed to participate further in the privatization of the Asset.

As a prerequisite to the receipt of the Bidding Package, interested parties shall execute a Confidentiality Agreement and an Undertaking pursuant to Section 79 of RA 9136, both in the forms provided by PSALM, and pay a non-refundable fee in the amount of Two Thousand U.S. Dollars (U.S.$ 2,000.00) (the "Participation Fee"). The Participation Fee shall either be in cash, manager's check or cashier's check. All bank charges, if any, shall be for the account of the interested party. The Confidentiality Agreement, Undertaking, and Participation Fee must be received by the Committee on or before **5:00 p.m. on 30 May 2008** to entitle an interested party to further participation in the privatization of the Asset.

The Bidding Package which includes the Bidding Procedures shall be issued during office hours (8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.) on **02 June 2008 up to 09 July 2008** (the "Deadline") at the PSALM Office. Only interested parties who have been issued the Bidding Package by the Deadline or consortium as described below will be allowed to participate further in the privatization of the Asset.

Interested parties that submit the LOI must be the party that will participate in the privatization process, submit a formal order for the purchase agreement. Once an interested party submits the Confidentiality Agreement and Undertaking and pays the Participation Fee, such interested party may no longer be substituted in the privatization process, except through a consortium in accordance with the terms and conditions of the Bidding Procedures, among the requirements of which are: (1) each interested party must own at least a majority of the shares outstanding and entitled to vote in such consortium; (2) the consortium must be a privatization entity; and (3) a letter requesting to bid through consortium must be submitted to the Committee on or before the deadline and for the same to the Bidding Procedures.

The schedule of the bidding activities shall be as follows:

Bid Diligence	27 May 2008 to 05 July 2008
Pre-Bid Conference	4 June 2008, 2:00 p.m. at the PSALM Office
Bid Submission Deadline	09 July 2008, 12:00 noon at the PSALM Office

References to the dates and times shall be based on Manila time. Should any of the above dates fall on a holiday, the deadline shall be extended to the same time of the immediately succeeding business day in Makati City.

A two-envelope bidding system will be adopted. Interested Parties will be required to post a bid security equivalent to Ten Million U.S. Dollars (U.S.$ 10,000,000.00) or the form of an irrevocable letter of credit which must be acceptable to the Committee. The bid security of the winning bidder shall be subsidized to a performance security to guaranty prompt, faithful and complete performance of its obligations under the bid documentation. The details of the privatization of this Asset are contained in the Bidding Package.

Letters of Interest, Confidentiality Agreements and Undertakings shall be addressed and submitted to: The Committee, Privatization, Bids and Awards Committee, PSALM Corporation, 7th Floor, Bonifacio Building, 6780 Ayala Avenue, Makati City, Philippines. Inquiries and clarifications shall be addressed to Mr. Rustico A. Tamayose at the PSALM Office or at telefax number (632) 893-6029 or at e-mail address bidprocess@psalm.gov.ph.

The Committee reserves the right to accept or reject any interested party or bidder or proposals or bids therefrom, or any part thereof, and/or to waive any defects contained therein and accept the offer advantageous to the Government, without offering any reason whatsoever. It does not assume any obligation to compensate the interested parties for any expenses or loss that they may incur as a result of their participation in the privatization process, nor does it guarantee that an award will be made. Finally, it reserves the right to modify, supplement, or change the Bidding Procedures and other aspects of the privatization process at any time, including the extension and/or annual proceeds herein, for any reason whatsoever and without giving prior notice. Interested parties and/or bidders will be notified subsequently of such modifications, supplements, or changes.

PSALM Privatization, Bids and Awards Committee

NEW YORK—WALL STREET IS closing its way back from a dismal start to the year as confidence grows about the prospects of a US economic recovery without a calamitous downturn.

The past week saw solid gains for the main indexes, as the Dow Jones Industrial Average climbed 1.9 percent to finish Friday at 12,980.80.

The Standard & Poor's 500 broad-market rallied 2.7 percent to 1,425.33 while the tech-dominated trading composite vaulted 3.4 percent for the week to 2,526.81.

The Dow blue-chip index is now lower by just 2.1 percent for the year, having recouped many losses from the first quarter.

The S&P is down 2.9 percent and the Nasdaq off 4.6 percent.

"We remain impressed by stock market action," said Al Goldman, chief market strategist at Wachovia Securities.

"Bad news is no longer killing the market, and bits of good news are well received," he added.

"Sooner or later investors realize that the economy will eventually turn back up and the current supposed 'unmanageable problems' will be surmounted. This is called 'looking beyond the valley to the peaks ahead,' and that's the market phase we are in now. I believe we are in."

Economic data remain mixed.

US housebuilding showed a surprisingly strong jump in April, with starts rising 6.2 percent in April from March to an annual rate of 1.002 million units.

Inflation fears clustered prices generally in check, but consumer confidence fell further, suggesting spending may remain weak despite a massive tax rebate program as part of the government's $168 bill. from economic stimulus.

Linda Bennett at Richmond Investors said the US economy appears to have weathered the housing and credit crisis, which would be positive for stocks.

"If we're right, and the worse of the credit crisis is behind us, we think the key issue is the nature of the current economic slowdown, and the potential for leakage into non-financial sectors," she said.

She said the US economy "will skirt recession," as a result of aggressive Federal Reserve interest rate cuts and more than $168 billion in tax rebates.

Ben Michael Hanson, economist at Lehman Brothers, said it may be too soon to bank on a strong recovery. He noted a sharp drop in automobile sales, which reflects the manufacturing sector and suggests consumers are shopping.

The 0.2 percent drop in retail sales "likely reflects tighter consumer lending and higher fuel prices that in coming months may spill over into other expenditure categories," Hanson said.

This week, investors get a light load of economic data and will focus on comments to be released from the Federal Reserve's April 29-30 policy meeting for clues on the central bank's [illegible]. AFP

Workers strike at GE supplier nearing end

DETROIT—A BITTER 80-DAY United Auto Workers strike against an auto parts maker that has crippled dozens of General Motors Corp. factories could be coming to an end soon with a tentative contract agreement, union leaders said Friday.

Renee Rogers, spokesperson for American Axle and Manufacturing Holdings Inc., confirmed Friday night that both sides had agreed on a deal, but said she could not provide details.

UAW president Ron Gettelfinger said in a statement Friday night that the American Axle bargaining committee voted to recommend the agreement to members.

The union said details of the deal would be presented to members in Detroit on Saturday.

About 2,680 UAW members at five factories have been on strike since Feb. 26 over the company's demand for reduced wages.

"This has been an extremely difficult struggle for our members and their families," UAW vice president Jimmy Settles said in a statement.

"By standing strong during this strike, UAW members gave our bargaining committee the strength to face the challenges at the negotiating table."

The work stoppage affected more than 30,000 plants and disrupted production by 250,000 vehicles through April. GM also said the strike cost the company $880 million [illegible] in lost sales.

Workers on the picket lines in Detroit have been hoping for a settlement since GM's surprise announcement on May 8 that it would throw in $200 million to help end the walkout.

The offer was contingent on a quick resolution of the dispute, but the deal didn't come for more than a week as both sides haggled over health care costs and supplemental unemployment benefits.

GM said in a filing with the US Securities and Exchange Commission that its money would go for temporary payments to buffer reduced wages for the workers, as well as employee buyout and early retirement packages.

Separately, Axle makes axles, drive shafts and stabilizer bars mainly for large GM sport utility vehicles and pickup trucks. AP

IMF fears impact of oil price hikes

WASHINGTON—RISING GLOBAL OIL prices could significantly dampen economic growth and may add to already financial markets, the International Monetary Fund's chief economist said on Friday.

Simon Johnson told Reuters in an interview that banks that suffered losses as a result of US-originated mortgage lending crisis have had greater-than-expected success in raising new money but he warned that progress could be undone by soaring energy costs.

"News from credit markets has been good and that is reassuring people," Johnson said.

"I think though that we are worried that oil price increases, depending on what happens if oil prices stay at this level, will have some significant dampening effects," he added.

Johnson said the large increase in oil prices since March, from about $100 a barrel to $125, not only hurt consumers' real incomes but also inflation expectations and makes policy harder to say.

"The developments since March are mixed," he said. *Reuters*

Republic of the Philippines
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
EASTERN VISAYAS
Government Center, Palo, Leyte

INVITATION TO APPLY FOR ELIGIBILITY AND TO BID

The DOH-Eastern Visayas, through its Bids and Awards Committee (BAC), invites Bids from eligible Bidders for Drugs & Medicines and Medical Supplies & Devices. The description of an eligible Bidder is contained in Section II of the Bidding Documents. ITB.

Location: DOH-Eastern Visayas, Government Center, Palo, Leyte
Approved Budget of the Contract (ABC): Php5,445,000.00

Prospective bidders should have experience in the supply and delivery of these various goods within the last two (2) years with an amount of at least 50% of the proposed project for bidding. The Eligibility Check/Screening as well as the Post-Qualification of Bids shall use non-discretionary "pass/fail" criteria. Post-qualification of the lowest rated bid shall be conducted.

All particulars relative to Eligibility Statement and Screening, Bid Security, Pre-bidding Conference(s), Evaluation of Bids, Post Qualification and Award of Contract shall be governed by the pertinent provisions of RA 9184 and its Implementing Rules and Regulation (IRR).

The complete schedule of activities is listed as follows:

Activities	Schedule
Letter of Intent	May 28-June 4, 2008
Issuance of Bid documents	June 4-10, 2008
Pre-Bid Conference	June 11, 2008 10:00 AM
Submission & Opening of Bids	June 25, 2008 10:00 AM
Evaluation of Bids	June 25-July 1, 2008
Issuance of Notice of Award	July 2-9, 2008
Approval of Contract	July 10-16, 2008
Issuance of Notice to Proceed	July 23, 2008

Bid documents will be available only to prospective bidders upon payment of an non-refundable amount of Php1,000.00 to the DOH-EV Cashier.

The DOH-EV reserves its responsibility whatsoever to compensate or indemnify bidders for any expenses incurred in the preparation of the bid.

(Sgd.) **MINERVA P. MOLON, M.D., MPH, FPPA**
BAC Chairperson

Noted by:

(Sgd.) **TEODORO F. BALUMA, MD, MHA, MSM, FPCHA**
Director III
Head, Procuring Entity

Yahoo pleads for secrecy

SAN FRANCISCO—YAHOO INC. IS SEEKing to conceal large portions of a shareholder lawsuit alleging the Internet company's board improperly thwarted Microsoft Corp.'s $47.5 billion takeover offer, raising shareholder questions over the motives for the secrecy.

In a letter sent Friday to the judge overseeing the case in Delaware, a lawyer for the shareholders argued Yahoo is trying "to whitewash embarrassing documents" because the company thinks the information will damage the board's efforts to repel a challenge by activist investor Carl Icahn.

Angered by the board's handling of Microsoft bid, Icahn has nominated an alternate slate of candidates to oppose Yahoo's 10 current directors at an annual shareholder meeting—in the November-based company's July 7 annual meeting.

Yahoo is trying "to sanitize the public record and maintain a cloak of secrecy regarding unflattering evidence of breach of fiduciary duty," shareholder attorney Joel Friedlander wrote in a letter to Chancellor William B. Chandler III.

The redacted documents include information about an employee severance plan that Yahoo adopted shortly after Microsoft made its initial bid Jan. 31 and notes about a conversation between Yang and Microsoft CEO Steve Ballmer, Friedlander wrote.

Yahoo had no immediate comment Friday. Generally, companies often seek to keep papers of public record filed by investors under seal for competitive reasons.

The concealed information was gathered during the discovery phase of the nearly three-month-old suit. If they're made public, the documents could become fodder in Icahn's campaign to remove Yahoo's board.

The information would be particularly damaging for Board if it appears the directors deliberately took steps to make Yahoo more expensive for Microsoft. AP

BUSINESS

BSP approves 30-hectare development deal between PNB, Eton Properties

By Doris C. Dumlao

THE BANGKO SENTRAL NG PILIPINAS has approved a 30-hectare property development deal between Philippine National Bank and Eton Properties Philippines Inc., both owned by tobacco magnate Lucio Tan.

The property is located in Novaliches, Quezon City.

In a meeting last Thursday, the BSP's policy-making Monetary Board also approved PNB's plan to raise up to P6 billion through the offering of subordinated notes, BSP Deputy Governor Nestor Espenilla Jr. said.

In an interview, PNB president Cesar Byron Mier said Eton Properties would develop, finance and manage the project, while his bank's contribution would be the property asset.

"It's a medium-cost community development in Novaliches," Mier said. "It's a big property; it will be developed in phases. It will also include a shopping center, a club house and four or five high-rise buildings."

Housing units are expected to sell for an average of P1 to P2 million, he added.

Also, PNB chose Deutsche Bank to arrange its P3-to P6-billion offering which would qualify as tier 2 or supplementary capital.

The notes shall carry a 10-year tenor with a call option and a "step-up" rate on the fifth year. A call option gives the issuer the right, but not the obligation, to buy the security at a specified price within a specified time period.

"Step-up" rate means that if PNB would not exercise its call option after the fifth year, it would pay a higher interest rate for the remaining term.

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DOF opposes plan to lift tax on gas

To bring down rates, Meralco should stop 'bad practices'

By Michelle V. Rocas

DESPITE MOUNTING CALLS FOR CHEAPER electricity rates, the Department of Finance is not inclined to support calls to lift the royalty on the national government has imposed on the sale of natural gas.

For the DOF, the best way to address the high cost of electricity is for power distribution like the Lopez-owned Manila Electric Co. (Meralco) to stop passing their systems losses on to consumers.

Last week, it was revealed during the hearings that, apart from electricity bills, customers also shouldered Meralco's losses, such as those resulting from pilferage.

In its defense, Meralco stressed that government itself was making electricity rates in the country costly by collecting royalties on the sale of natural gas, and value-added tax on oil and power.

But the DOF said lifting the royalties was easier said than done. The government would lose billions from the proposed lifting of royalties—proceeds of which would be used for vital expenditures such as the fuel requirements of the state-owned National Power Corp. (Napocor).

LOPEZ

Citing figures from the energy department, the DOF said the government generated P12.21 billion in royalties from the sale of natural gas last year, and P1.3 billion in January and February this year.

Natural gas is used by power generating firms like Napocor to produce electricity which is, in turn, bought by power distribution companies including Meralco.

A ranking official from the DOF said the government could not simply lift the royalty tax because of the expenditure requirements that it supports. Removing the royalty tax would force the government to seek alternative sources of funds, such as new taxes, to compensate for the foregone revenues, the official explained.

The source could not be identified because the DOF's position paper on the matter has yet to be formally released.

In the draft paper, the DOF said what was making electricity in the country expensive was Meralco's bad practice of passing on to consumers losses to customers. And the practice would relieve consumers from paying high power costs, the DOF said.

The DOF was responding to proposals from the Senate to lift the royalty tax charged by the government on the sale of natural gas produced from Malampaya. Senators Francis Escudero and Alan Peter Cayetano raised the proposal at the height of last week's Senate hearings on electricity rates.

The DOF was also responding to a paid newspaper advertisement taken out by Oscar Lopez last week.

According to Lopez, the heavy taxation on the power sector is the reason why electricity rates in the Philippines are costlier than that of neighboring countries.

"If we clamor for cheaper power, why do we tax it so heavily in the first place," Lopez said in the advertisement addressed to President Macapagal-Arroyo.

He urged the President to consider lifting the royalty tax on natural gas and the value-added tax on oil and electricity.

The DOF also opposed calls to lift the 12-percent VAT on oil and electricity, saying such a move would lead to over P56 billion in lost revenue for the government.

The revenue loss will not only derail the government's target of posting a balanced budget this year, but also drag down efforts to increase spending for social services.

The DOF said a better way to ease the burden of consumers would be to enhance efficiency in tax collection and use the proceeds to beef up spending for social services.

MONDAY, MAY 15, 2006 PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER B7 C1

BUSINESS Monday

Assess Futures | Jobs | Margie Quimpo-Espino

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Nokia's Whyte says he has no roots

By Margie Quimpo-Espino

NOKIA COUNTRY MANAGER William Hamilton-Whyte is a citizen of the world.

His father is from Scotland and his mother is French. He was born in Kenya, grew up in Tanzania, then lived in different points in his life in Mauritius, Cambodia, Thailand, Egypt, England and eventually Paris where he went to university.

It is no surprise then that he says "I have no roots" and that he only goes to Paris to visit his parents.

He lived around the world as his father used to work for the British Tobacco Co. and the family moved wherever he was posted to another country.

Whyte recalls that he was 13 years old when he and his family got on the last commercial plane out of Cambodia just before the Khmer Rouge took over the country.

The Khmer Rouge was the leftist group headed by Pol Pot that controlled Cambodia between 1975 and 1978.

This enviable exposure to various cultures has made Whyte sensitive to people's sensibilities and he says he learned much along the way.

When he lived in Egypt, for instance, he learned to read and speak Arabic. He has the ability to talk to Arabs but he can still understand the language.

As for Filipinos, he says his first impression upon coming here was that they were very Latin in nature. And he realized something our many have told Filipinos – that they have a lot in common with the French.

"The sensitivity in emotions, the need to read between the lines [of what they are saying]. The English and the Germans do not like to deal with the French as we are still negotiating after the deal has been signed. They [the French] don't necessarily like confrontation," he explains during a recent briefing with the business business section.

He adds that Filipinos and the French do not go straight to the point.

Whyte was pleasantly surprised about the Philippines. "It's the opposite of what I expected." Although he adds that he had Filipino friends, his Paris sales gave him an idea of what to expect.

Now that he's here, Whyte says his task as country manager of the leading mobile phone brand is primarily marketing—choosing the models that will be sold in the Philippines from the 40 that Nokia puts out every year.

He gets a lot of help from the members of his management team who have a good idea of what models will make it in the Philippines. Nokia introduces to the Philippines about 20 new models every year.

"THIS is a fantastic place to work."

WILLIAM Hamilton-Whyte

Whyte entered his career in information technology in a small French firm. A head hunter approached him in 1997 and asked if he would like to join Nokia. At that time, he says nobody had heard of the Finnish firm, even the world's biggest mobile phone firm.

But he joined because he says "I sensed the IT business and I was not going to miss the telco boom."

The decision proved to be right one as the growth of mobile phones over the last decade has been tremendous.

In his last post to Paris, he was head of the group servicing mega operators that in-

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Biofuels: Muddled issues

DESPITE THE RAGING DEBATE ON the pros and cons of biofuels, some countries are fast increasing their biofuel production.

The European Union, the largest market for biofuels, aims to make biofuels account for 5.75 percent of its transport fuels by 2010 and 10 percent by 2020. In the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Thailand is expected to be the region's leading producer of biofuels.

What should we do in the Philippines? Biofuels are part of the unceasing energy and fuel equation. We must face demands on these decision making. It involves the views and preferences of many decision makers and stakeholders, from farmers to top policy makers.

Decisions taken now may have long-term implications on the use of lands and other resources.

For similar important cases beset with uncertainty, more big corporations in the world apply decision analysis. In applying it, we must first define the values and preferences of the decision maker (or the group of stakeholders), specify the decisions to be made and identify the alternatives.

The relevant values and preferences in this case could be a) increased income for farmers through agricultural development; b) "food security," or need to invest more in agricultural development, including sustainable and secure food, feeds and fuel sources, and c) greening of the environment by using cleaner fuel.

Issues

Resorting to the rice crisis, some legislators now call for suspension of the implementation of the Biofuels Act of 2006, which mandates the progressive production and use of biofuels. This is one decision point that is clouded by uncertainty.

The most important issues associated with biofuels are food poverty, food security, energy security and the land vs. fuel issue.

Various groups in other parts of the world have been studying these issues. We can refer to the results of their studies, since we have not done our own investigations now.

One ongoing study is headed by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation at Stanford University. Its research team includes Prof. Walter Falcon, former chair of IRRI, who kindly shared with me an initial report on their research.

Their policy research on the food vs. fuel issue involves a quantitative assessment of the effect of biofuels expansion on food security in the developing world.

Rural poverty and food security

The Stanford study concluded that "it is likely that aggregate investments in agricultural development in the national or regional level will be more effective in reducing rural poverty than technical biofuels investments by specific companies or groups."

Hence, to achieve "increased income for farmers through agricultural development" and "food security," we need to invest more in agricultural development, including sustainable technologies and infrastructure for food production and marketing and small-holder farmers' access to land, capital, credit and technology.

The investments must also ensure availability of water, which is essential in food production, but is now the subject of acute controversies.

Biofuels may not help much to achieving increased income of farmers. But suspending the Biofuels Law will not help raise incomes or secure food supply. Adequate investments in agricultural development will most likely do both.

MAPping THE FUTURE

Cameron P.B. Cawiles

Energy Security

Energy security is a major issue facing us. In applying decision analysis on energy supply, the availability and price of imported fuel are uncertain variables that we cannot control. We can only adopt measures to adjust to them.

We need to focus on what we can control. Producing our own fuel, such as biofuels, is one of them. How to do so is the challenge that requires work.

We need to attend also to energy demand, e.g., by applying energy conservation measures. Biofuels production that provides for active participation of local people could also lead to improved demand management.

Food versus Fuel

The issue seems to boil down to what crop to plant for biofuel and others, so that it will not compete with food needs.

We still have many underutilized lands as I will focus more on the crop. Emerging crop choices in the Philippines are coconut (which is already being used for biodiesel production), sugarcane (which will be the feedstock for a bioethanol plant that will soon operate in Negros), sweet sorghum (which the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics recommends as major feedstock for bioethanol), jatropha (which receives priority government attention), and malunggay (which can produce oil for both food and fuel). All, except jatropha, have food, feed and fuel uses. Algae and waste biomass, which are gaining more interest in other countries, can also be produced in the Philippines.

Some major considerations in choosing a feedstock are energy yield of a crop, production costs and returns, effects on farmers and employment and impact on the environment (on soil, water, biodiversity, land use, and climate).

Preliminary results of the Stanford study have concluded that the effects of biofuels on food prices can be traced through the responsiveness of supply and demand of the crops to prices (which depends on substitution possibilities in production and consumption for food, feed and fuel), the ability of countries to expand land area and raise yields for biofuel feedstock, market integration between the biofuels and food fuels markets and policy interactions.

Recommendations

The long-run effects, the study says, depend on changing resources, tastes, biofuels research and development, and infrastructure investments.

The EU hopes to achieve its goals by reallocating more land, increasing land productivity and crop yield by with modern plant breeding techniques and biotechnology and focusing on the production of biofuels from cellulose and agricultural waste [the second generation fuels] instead of starch, sugar and oils [the first generation ones].

How do we hope to achieve ours?

First, we must strengthen our research and development capability so that we can analyze existing biofuel alternatives, create new ones and give well-thought out responses to issues raised. We must mobilize our best scientists and provide them with adequate laboratory and other facilities so they can help create new or improved fuel, as well as food and feed, sources and systems.

The ripple effects of biofuels on food security, as the initial Stanford report concludes, depend on the country and its policies. In our country, we must improve our policy making, conduct more rigorous decision analysis, and act faster. We must invest more in agricultural development now if we want to achieve food security.

It is not clear what difference exceptions of the implementation of the Biofuels Act will make. But if the approved Biofuels list is flawed to begin with, we should, perhaps, suspend law-making until such time that more thinking goes into it.

(The author is president of BARTU Inchcape Agila Inc. and Director/Son of dad's Feldkamm. Amendment, which will feature biofuels on May 21, 7:30–8:30 p.m. at Bulli-Asturia and TOMOS Awards for Science and Technology Degree Program in the late 30s. Feedback at mapp@philbusmo.com.ph. For previous articles, please visit <map.org.ph>.)

Pinoy engineer trains foreign experts

EVERY LITTLE BOY DREAMS of building homes, schools and magnificent structures that touch the sky. Filipinos have been doing just that and the whole world knows. Jose V. Nellasca was once a boy from Naga City who built imaginary skyscrapers out of wooden blocks and scissors (borrowed mom's cover) piled one on top of the other. With skill and relentless determination, Engineer Joe is now living his dreams.

As Service Manager of the Shutdowns Group Inc., Joe is a pioneer and an expert in tower cranes. He is constantly sent abroad to train both Filipino and foreign engineers to effectively and properly operate tower cranes and to update his technical know-how particularly when new models are introduced. His travels have taken him to different parts of the globe: from Singapore, Indonesia, Australia, Vietnam, Cambodia, Korea, China, Thailand, to the Himalayas, Nepal, Brunei, Saudi Arabia and France.

The current construction boom has created a myriad of opportunities for highly trained Filipino engineers. Engr. Joe shares that Filipinos armed with education and the virtues of dependability, discipline, and the ability to communicate effectively, maintain a competitive edge over foreign counterparts in becoming the top choice among employers worldwide. "Filipino engineers have a big advantage," says Engr. Joe, "because while other engineers prefer to work in their own country, many Filipino engineers are willing to go abroad and are close other seas to train others for high engineers." Another trait that our engineers exhibit is the dedication to one's work and the willingness to go beyond what is expected. "Filipino engineers become more leaders because they go the extra mile, like learning to speak the language necessary to be more effective at work," Engr. Joe says, the pride for his countrymen apparent in his voice.

During the extra mile is second nature to Engr. Joe who recounts the very challenging experience of working in Nepal during the Maoist government war in 2002. "Operations in Nepal were closed for a week and it was dangerous to go out. But I still had to go on with my training for one-and-a-half months. Working with tower cranes is difficult. You have to be well-trained to operate this machine. Safety is my first priority", he says.

The professional duty of making safety Priority One is the next technical expertise as the job site is ingrained in our engineers. Doing so avoids risks to workers and eliminates the possibility of compromising equipment and facilities. Proper maintenance also plays a vital role in the construction process. Defects and failures during the construction and the use of inferior equipment can result to injury, higher insurance premiums, disruptive and delays, penalties, lengthy civil suits, and even death.

Bernie Pilares, president and CEO of Shutdowns Crane Group Inc., of which leading crane brand Nissan is part of, applauds the integrity of Filipino engineers and cites Engr. Joe as an outstanding example. "Joe has witnessed the development of Zoomlion, from the development of new models, to the technological changes and product improvements that it has undergone, and its significant contribution to safer, more efficient construction."

"Aside from his expertise and years of experience, he has the courage to speak up-values in the world if and when his services are required. He has taught countless technical people how to focus the company and their customers, about the theory and practice of tower cranes. He has known some who disregard safety for the sake of quick profits but he has always been steadfast. Engineer Joe does not compromise on quality and safety."

"There is no need for unnecessary exposure to danger due to cheap substandard machines," Engr. Joe says firmly. "Complex projects all over the world demand proficient, well-trained engineers who are up-to-date on the latest technology and safety standards. Filipino engineers are up to the challenge."

NELLASCA believes that Filipino engineers have an advantage over foreign counterparts because they make an effort to learn the local language to make their stays effective at work.

UMILAB WINS AWARD

Umilab, the country's leading pharmaceutical and healthcare company, won the the Philippine Institute of Supply Management's Earned Stamp Corporate Award for Excellence in Supply Management Practices. Umilab was recognized for best practices in supply management that demonstrate leadership and innovation, and helped develop supply management profession as an strategic contributor to Umilab's business. Umilab president and CEO Carlos Ejercito (2nd from left) received the award from the Society of Fellows in Supply Management president Romeo Perez and Budget Undersecretary Lolita Lievano in a ceremony held during its 40th Annual Conference and Trade Exhibit. With them are Umilab director for corporate affairs Bart Mariglit, SVP-materials planning and sourcing Tina Garcia, and SVP-supply chain Julius Manalo.

Nokia's Whyte . . .

▶ From page B4-1

cluded companies like Vodafone, Verizon, AT&T and Orange for Europe. He had under him 11 countries as "I was living in planes."

As CEO of the Philippines, he now gets to ride planes he pleases and getting to know the country.

He has been to Cebu, Davao, Baguio, Dumaguete, Bohol, Boracay and Coron, just.

To Whyte, Asia is the place to be.

"Asia is booming and is very much advanced. Here in the Philippines, the technology of Smart and Globe is more advanced than even the US. This is a fantastic place to work."

But the consumer business has also become much more challenging, says Whyte.

"For years we supplied the world with Nokia phones. We became a super player that needed to be made lighter. We were the kid rocking," he explains.

Then a few years ago, Nokia was split into three units—mobile phones for enterprise solutions, solutions for mobility and multimedia and web brands.

"Our job is one in think of lifestyle and fashion but of multimedia—the best camera, the best size, the best speed."

One thing's sure—Nokia will not run out of a market.

As Whyte says, in the Philippines, the average age of kids with cellular phones is 15.

And with the youth constituting 60 percent of the nation's 88 million Filipinos, it's a huge market, indeed.

Chocolate making and molding seminar on May 24

YOU CAN MAKE MONEY IN the chocolate making business. You can start right in your kitchens.

The Golden Treasure Skills Development Program will conduct a seminar on chocolate making and molding at the Intramuros Administration at 9 Intramuros Rd. Proj. 3, Quezon City on May 24, Saturday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Topics to be discussed are sourcing of materials, costing, and also there will be a lecture on entrepreneurship on how to start and maintain a business. There will be a hands on experience for the making of chocolate bars, in assorted colors and different shapes of chocolates like round, bears, hearts, flowers shapes, etc. Also packaging, uses of colorants and tips on chocolate business will be tackled.

Participants will receive a certificate of training. All the materials will be provided.

For inquiries, call 436-79-26, 413-63-31; 433-78-00 and 421-33-77.

GET YOUR HYUNDAI IN TOP SHAPE WITH C.L.A.S.S.

Picture this: parents rushing their way to get their kids to school on time, PUVs in a mad clash to load passengers at every stop, and the general morning public getting caught in a frenzy of rants hassling to get to work or anywhere in the metropolis before the clock ticks 7AM in time for the color coding-cum-number coding traffic regulation scheme. Yes, indeed, summer's almost over and many are now bracing themselves for the back-to-school rush.

In this hustle, it's your vehicle that absorbs all the pressure as you mercilessly step on the accelerator, hit the brakes all too hard, or constantly shift gears enough to put the gear stick out to oblivion. Will your car be ready and equipped to handle the inevitable stress that goes with another school year? If you're a Hyundai car owner, the answer is a resounding yes, because you've got time to enroll your Hyundai car to C.L.A.S.S. and get it in shape!

A C.L.A.S.S. - leading Advantage

The Certified Legitimate After Sales Service or C.L.A.S.S. from Hyundai Asia Resources, Inc. (HARI) offers Hyundai car owners a range of class-leading after sales services to ensure that their vehicles are performing in top condition in time for the school year. Take your Hyundai to C.L.A.S.S. at any participating dealer and enjoy discounts and freebies that go with special service packages like mineral oil change, semi-synthetic oil change, fully-synthetic oil change, brake checkup, and the Suspension Gimanza. HARI's newest C.L.A.S.S. package for the Matrix, Matrix, and Getz models, as well as for out of warranty and non-HARI distributor sold vehicles.

What's even better, all packages come with free exterior body wash, interior vacuum cleaning and tire black. As much as 10% discount on labor charges is also available for aircon cleaning. Plus, there's free 21-point check-up to boot, wherein car parts and conditions integral to overall vehicle safety, performance, and driving comfort are inspected such as brake fluid level, fuel leak, tire condition, aircon refrigerant, spark plugs and ht-tension wires, engine idle and A/C RPM, seatbelts/mounting, charging system, and the like.

Safety is First with Hyundai

Aside from Hyundai's C.L.A.S.S., Hyundai customers are also afforded the convenience and opportunity to avail of genuine Hyundai parts and accessories at authorized dealerships. When you buy Genuine Hyundai Parts, the "100% Genuine" sticker on the packaging already hints of a sense of assurance—it's the mark that immediately guarantees you of the genuine advantage that only Hyundai parts can provide when you travel on the open road.

As a significant step in reinforcing Hyundai's brand of providing total customer satisfaction, HARI's "100% Genuine" seal represents the unparalleled quality of genuine Hyundai parts and accessories to optimize the performance of each Hyundai vehicle. Manufactured using state-of-the-art technology, genuine Hyundai parts and accessories translate to safety you can be confident in with their proven reliability—design-wise and performance-wise, keeping your Hyundai cars performing their best at every journey.

"We, at HARI, understand our responsibility to our customers; we're here not only to offer them the most stylish or powerful cars. We are here to empower them to enhance their motoring lifestyles, beginning with a high regard for their safety, and that of their families and loved ones," said Ms. Fe Perez Agudo during a recent interview. "Through our initiatives such as the C.L.A.S.S. and Genuine Parts campaign, we hope to instill in the Filipino motorists the values of road safety by investing on quality parts and accessories for their Hyundai vehicles, as well as trusting the prompt and efficient service of HARI's expert technicians and service personnel."

In the same token of safety, Ms. Agudo stressed the importance and convenience of acquiring genuine parts and accessories at authorized dealerships. "By purchasing Hyundai parts and accessories directly at the dealership, customers are advantaged to the best deal for procurement of parts, and most importantly, customers are assured of the authenticity and quality of parts, which don't come standard in unauthorized outlets," explained Ms. Agudo. "On top of that, all these privileges are also complemented by HARI's brand of C.A.R.E., or Cordial, Accurate, Reliable, and Efficient and Speedy Service, as we are all out to enhance the customer's brand experience and make their every trip at our showrooms truly a rewarding one. Or that ride. I'd like to invite every one to avail of Hyundai's C.L.A.S.S. We have a nationwide fortress of 21 dealerships ready to serve you and share with you a brand experience that's uniquely Hyundai. See you in C.L.A.S.S. soon!"

With all the many services and advantages made available to you by HARI, you and your Hyundai car will be ready to take on the road-come school time, is virtually anytime. So, go and beat the back-to-school rush. Wrap up your Hyundai for another year of great performance with C.L.A.S.S. at participating Hyundai dealers today! Hyundai's C.L.A.S.S. is ongoing from May 19 to July 15, 2006.

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FULLY-SYNTHETIC OIL CHANGE
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PACKAGE 4
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(E) UPPER & LOWER BALL JOINT (F) SHOCK ABSORBER

21 FREE 21-POINT CHECKUP
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(6) WINDSHIELD WASHER FLUID LEVEL
(7) TIRE CONDITION
(8) BRAKE PEDAL
(9) HANDBRAKE
(10) AIRCON REFRIGERANT
(11) MUFFLERS MOUNTING
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HELIX

HYUNDAI

BUSINESS Monday

LOOKING FOR A BARGAIN?

Check out Baguio jail's summer sale

See story on page B3-1

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Editor Aries Espinosa

Globe collaborates with DTI for Masigasig Awards

GLOBE AND THE DEPARTMENT of Trade and Industry (DTI) once again join forces to recognize the exceptional performance of outgoing Filipino entrepreneurs and their contributions to society and the economy in this year's Masigasig Awards for Micro, Small and Medium-scale enterprises (MSME).

Globe firmly believes that DTI is one of the most credible and most influential government agencies that make a tremendous impact to the country's business landscape. This is the reason Globe is fully supporting all of the initiatives of DTI to promote the development of the business landscape, especially from the micro to the small to medium sector.

The agency has become an important partner for Globe as DTI's push coincide with the company's scheme to empower Filipinos who want to establish their own businesses.

The MSME-Masigasig Awards seek to recognize entrepreneurs who epitomize the definition of the word masigasig. These are entrepreneurs who are determined, persistent, and motivated with a strong sense of direction in terms of goals to be achieved.

Globe aims to support MSME development in the Philippines through the grant of Masigasig Awards to this year's MSME winners. Globe Business seeks to provide the right connections that will fuel business growth.

For this year's MSME-Masigasig Awards, DTI and Globe will honor three Outstanding MSME Awardees-one from Luzon, one from Visayas, and one from Mindanao. Among the three regional awardees, one national winner will be selected as the Outstanding MSME of the Year. The latter will additionally conferred the Globe Masigasig Awardee of the Year.

To qualify for the awards, winners must have an asset size of not more than P15.00 million at the time of nomination. They can be engaged in manufacturing, agri-business, trading (wholesale or retail) or service (business process outsourcing, hospitality and creative industry).

The nominee's business, which must be majority Filipino-owned and duly registered with appropriate government agencies, can either be a single proprietorship, co-operative, association, partnership or corporation. The nominee must have been in operation for at least two years at the time of nomination.

The nominee should also be able to identify the impact of their businesses in any of the areas of Business and Investment Enabling Environment, Access to Finance, Access to Markets, Productivity and Efficiency as a result of the assistance given by the government and/or private organizations. These shall include, among others, information and communications, transportation, energy, and corporate social responsibility.

Start nominating deserving SMEs for this year's Masigasig Awards! Great prizes are in store for the winner. The deadline for submission of nominations to DTI provincial offices is on June 6.

For more information or questions about the Masigasig Awards, proceed to your nearest DTI provincial office, log on to www.dti.gov.ph, or call the DTI hotline at 890-4988.

NESTEA BEACH VOLLEY LUZON ELIMINATIONS IN ISLAND COVE

Top Right Beach volley action took the center stage at Island Cove Hotel and Leisure Park in Cavite as 16 schools from all over Luzon participated in the 2008 Nestea Beach Volley National Circuit leg held on 12 April. Mediterranean-inspired location, Island Cove Hotel and Leisure Park hosts this year's Nestea Beach Volley every exciting first ever as none of the country's top beach volley teams competed for beach volley supremacy and cash prizes amounting to P 500,000. The event was sponsored by Nestea.

MUSICAL SHOW AT GRAN SEVILLE'S GRAND OPEN HOUSE

A musical revue for brokers and agents was held during the open house and inauguration of the 5-story mega model of Sevilla in Calauan, Laguna. Gran Seville, a pioneer real estate development, is a 24-hectare Spanish-inspired community in Calauan, Laguna that offers house and lot packages and residential and commercial lots. Its clear recreational and commercial area and accessibility as it is right along the national highway. The grand house and model opened with a media coup that featured Cupid accompanied by Visitacion's in-house sales personnel that raved around Manila, where the project is located, and other areas in Calauan. The guests were treated to a night of books and food and party music by Sam the Band on Fire, fans of Laguna's hottest bands.

HOLCIM AT WORLDBEX 2008

Holcim Philippines Inc, one of the leading cement companies in the Philippines, displayed its array of high quality products at the Worldbex 2008 exhibition at the Mezzo Event Center. Above is Metropolitan Manila Development Authority Chair Bayani Fernando visiting the Holcim booth. Fernando made timely gastronomical about Holcim products and projects.

Indoor activities at the PMA Summer Fun Fair 2008

PMA MEMBERS, ALUMNI WITH their families and active guests, are invited to kick off the latest rest of this year's summer season with one more escapade filled with fun and activities in the PMA Summer Fun Fair 2008, which will be held at the Glorietta Activity Center this May 27 and 28.

Swimming enthusiasts in the family get to flood off boredom in their pet their "Cruise On!" this 27th as they go head-to-head in an online game competition featuring games such as Pirate Ship On-line, Dance On-line, Drift City and Bots. Ranking players awaits the winners of the individual and team categories.

Creativity, talent, and coordinance take the spotlight in the activities lined up for the 28th.

First off is the "Manika Ko?" activity which is done to participate with the "Bahasi Mo, Manika Ko" video contest and is geared to teach kids of all ages to make their own dolls out of cloth scraps. For interested parties, a minimal fee of P150 will cover all the doll materials including accessories, and for an additional P100, they can enlist an artist's help to beautify their creations. The "Manika Ko" activity is from 1 to 5 p.m.

Next, PMA members get a chance to show off their singing prowess, taking those high notes as they strive to score one on top of "Idorol" The finals for PMA's Extreme Pop Star? is to be held from 3 to 5 p.m. of that day. In that two-hour period, a 45-minute workshop is included, and will be conducted by Bench Alkaysen of the Center for Pop. The singing contest will be facilitated by Arlen Magic Dog, Wincent, of course, will bring home spectacular prizes.

And finally, in what could be a final showcase of summer wear, fashionable PMA members and select guests strut their stuff in "Pista Puti", the fabulous summer fashion show set to kick off at 4 to 7 p.m. So sign up and go HAM!

Heritage Hotel's perfect view of Pyro Olympics

A SPECTACULAR FIREWORKS show in Manila is set to put your senses ablaze in the 3rd World Pyro Olympics, and once again its at least home at the Heritage Hotel Manila. Far away from the mad-as-ground, chill out and enjoy lip-smacking gastronomic sensations at a buffet dinner starting at 7 p.m. at its Roof Terrace Garden while relishing the perfect view of the festive pyrotechnics that will ignite the summer night sky on May 24 for only P950 per person and P475 for children 12 years old and below. The World Pyro Olympics organized by La Mancha Productions is the annual international competition amongst the most prestigious fireworks companies in the world at the Esplanade, SM Mall of Asia Complex, Manila Bay area. Six international participants showcase never-before-seen innovative pyrotechnic displays. On May 24, the Fabiosapito of fire display features spectacular fireworks choreographed with music courtesy of La Mancha Pyro Productions. Enjoy the awe-inspiring view of the fireworks in the tactic comforts of one of the hotel's newly refurbished rooms featuring the highly acclaimed paintings of Master Dante Vintage, an international-acclaimed artist. Overnight stay is inclusive of breakfast for two and free scheduled shuttle service to SM Mall of Asia. For reservations, call 854-8888.

Be a millionaire in BPI promo

THE BANK OF THE PHILIPPINE Islands launches its 2008 "P2 Million Thanks To You, Part 2" in grateful response to the millions of Filipinos abroad who have helped make BPI the number one remittance bank in the Philippines for two straight years, as awarded by the Singlife Survey by Filipinos. The BPIfamily remittance process, which is now on its fourth year, has been known to give away major prizes that many Filipinos working or living abroad dream of and aspire for. Through the years, the BPI promos have given many homes and cars, business franchises, educational prizes and big cash monies. The remittance process kicks off much earlier this year to give more chances to more Pinoys all over the world to participate.

Every month, the country-senders give the chance to win a travel award certificate equivalent to a round-trip ticket to the Philippines from his region of work or residence abroad. What's more, his beneficiary wins a per-peso cash prize too. The luckiest entry can win P2 million in cash to the grand draw. All in all, BPIfamily remittance promo will raffle off more than P3 million in raffle prizes!

The promo is ongoing until 30th Jun 2008! For all Filipinos abroad sending their remittances through any of BPI's remittance centers in the United States, Spain, Italy, United Kingdom and Hong Kong, and any BPI tie-up company anywhere in the world. Regardless of amount of transaction, any remittance sent to a BPI, BPI Family or BPI direct account must use remittance-generated raffle number. For more information on how 2 of BPI "P2 Million Thanks To You" remittance promo, log on to www.bpiexpressonline.com and click on remittance.

Philippine Air Force to get 18 new Aermacchi SF260F trainers

FILIPINO MILITARY PILOTS WILL SOON have the opportunity to train and handle new aircraft as the country's airforce with the Department of National Defense's recent approval and issuance of Notice to Proceed to Alenia Aermacchi S.p.A. for the supply of 18 new M 260 F version for its Armed Forces/Philippine Air Force's military pilot training.

The contract includes integrated logistics package such as pilot, embedded unit maintainer training, initial equipment and spares support, after sales services support.

Alenia Aermacchi's delivery schedule of the 18 units in batches shall be completed from the 12th to 18th month from contract implementation.

The SF 260 trainer aircraft is in service with 27 armed forces in the world with almost 1,000 units in flight operations.

The PAF's last procurement of new aircraft of 18 SF 260 Turbo Prop trainer, was converted as light attack aircraft, was almost two decades ago from the same Italian company. The PAF's SF 260 pilots engines & trainer were procured in the '70s and were used in both flight training and operational activities.

In addition to the supply of new aircraft, Alenia Aermacchi commits the aircraft assembly and some parts production technology transfer to the Philippines through its exclusive local partner/distributor/reseller, dual service station, logistics Philippines Inc, teaming with this contract with the AFP/PAF.

ARC FARMERS, COMMUNITY LEADERS ATTEND ECOLOGY FORUM

Mindoro Holcim and Cecilio De Asis also attended. ILBMF two-year chairs Roy Cardona, Marcel Gonzalez, Rafael Rafaelcastro and Benedicto Lopez, Panaitan III, Sun Roque, and Raybooker of SOME are leading the project against the existing operation of a delegate for the garbage collection. Barangay officials Arturo Perez and Delroy Dela Cruz of Mamburao, Mindoro City, are pushing for the immediate closure of the 14-year-old city dumpsite which is right in the middle of households and rice farms. Rotarian Kathleen Hernandez, associate professor Barbarie Ballera and lawyer Armand Mejia (Barangay Chair Romeo Tonog and Councilor Nora Santos of Barangay Tabacdan, Calapan, Oriental Mindoro) are working on their campaign and environmentally sound disposal. Co-Sweden from which compost is brought as starter organic for Bliss for Patty Pinoy plant activities.

Check out Baguio jail's summer sale

THE PROMOTIONAL sale was meant to thank local patrons who have made the souvenir business profitable.

Text by Vincent Cabreza
Inquirer Northern Luzon

BAGUIO CITY—CRISPETINO HAM on with the annual summer sale promotions of local shopping malls this month is a table at the doorway of the Baguio City Jail filled with cheap souvenir items.

Miniature wood- working chests made of vanilla from tiger grass Scrolls called "bayog"), which can hold mobile cellphones, some cost between P85 and P95.

These fancy cell phone stands have sold briskly for years.

The inmates carved out telephone stands for each political inclination. A batch of them bears the phrase "Gloria Forever!" while others have the surname "Gloria Fury!"

Wall clocks, also shaped and framed by tiger grass, are now priced lower than P1,000. There's even a coconut-shelled wall clock selling for P1,250.

Welcome to the City Jail Sale.

Lawyer Miguel Cawi, jail warden, says this is perhaps the only promotional event of its kind in Baguio, or at least from this segment of the local business community.

Cawi introduces the souvenir project partly as a rehabilitation program. But the souvenirs actually draw customers, he says, so it evolved into a thriving business.

An inmate who wanted to be identified only as Banjo, president of the Usteed Inmates Organization, says the promotional sale was meant to thank local patrons who made their souvenir business profitable.

Hooch came to the jail for promotional gift items while inmates come to them for graduation giveaways.

The inmates have managed to earn approximately P1.09 million from their souvenir corporation since it began in 2005, Banjo says.

He says one inmate was able to send his children to college from the sale of souvenir items.

"Inmates used to work for money and supplies from relatives. We are different. Relatives come here to receive money from us," Banjo says.

Each month's take easily comes up to P80,000, he says, encouraging more inmates to buy a share in the cooperative so they can profit too. A share is worth P5, Banjo says.

Their popularity in the markets is not their cost-effectiveness, however. Banjo says some naughty inmates attract a very good side market.

Their love seller has been a cellphone stand that bears this dogma: "Lorain Arroyo Negrada Feb. 14, 2008."

'Sky's-the-limit' birthday parties for kids in US

NEW YORK—IT WAS A TOUGH choice for the five-year-old's birthday girl, whether to choose the baby blue nail varnish to match her dress or the pretty peach as her giggly guests awaited their turn.

Welcome to the world of Americans birthday parties, where doting parents dig deep to spoil their little princesses and princes on their special day. And the sky is the limit.

Jennifer turned out in her dance studio leotard dress, had been adamant that she wanted a pedicure party to celebrate her fifth birthday and was making her first trip to the day finishing Nirvana salon on Manhattan's Upper West Side.

"I don't know if it was a good idea, I wanted to have a smaller group of people, it's hard in the house, and she wanted to have it," sighed mom Anne Lewis Hagmann, a divorce lawyer, as the girls sobbed and sifted over the colorful nail polishes.

"I was also trying not to spend thousands. I looked on the Internet and all is no expension. Here it is already 50 dollars per kid with our the options."

In the end, Jennifer chose bulk colors, alternating them on her fingers and toes, and sipping them with a celebratory smoothie.

But some might have considered her salon surprise a pretty mean affair, in what has become a growing fixture in these solid, and often extravagant, over-the-top children's celebrations.

How about a pirate party aboard the four-masted barque "Peking," part of the South Street Seaport Museum? Some parents may need the help of a little bailout treasure to pay the $2,000 bill for a gathering for 20.

Or their little monkeys could have a trip to the Bronx zoo. Themed educational "mommy-mania" parties with drinks and cake included go for around $7,200.

Children's parties have come a long way from balloons and games in the front room of your house, followed by a birthday tea of sandwiches and cake.

And the choices are as endless as a child's imagination and limited only by the size of their parents' wallet.

Steve Parks, manager at the Dashing Diva salon for two years, said business is brisk.

"It's been growing and growing. We are having more and more parties. Seventeen, the kids' series in Essex from Connecticut," he told AFP.

While Jennifer and her 13 friends sat demurely on a puffed pink love seat awaiting the manicurists at work, 20-year-old Dominick Lamoreaux was hard at work handing out lollipops and whipping up the party atmosphere with some music.

There is one draw for calm. As the lights went down, Swarovski artwork with a white crystal application decorated with pink and green flowers.

Suddenly all divorcees was one to the mind, as with whoops of joy after blowing out the five candles, the girls dug into the other ignoring their freshly painted nails.

And when they all left exhausted after a fun-filled afternoon, at least Jennifer's mom knew there was no mess to clear up at home. AFP

"Asia will be a major source of breakthroughs and advances"
—Bill Gates' Annual Bo'ao Forum for Asian, China, April 21, 2007

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BUSINESS Monday

Turning toy guns into mean 'war' machines

Text and photos by Dalila T. Mallari Jr.
Inquirer Southern Luzon

LUCENA CITY—GERALD Caliwara's passion for his chosen sport has brought him into a kind of job he now enjoys—gunsmith of airsoft firearms.

Mr. Caliwara, 40, resident gunsmith of Gateway Airsoft Group (GAG), a bunch of toy gun owners based in Lucena City, regular maintenance of their firearms is a must for all enthusiasts to fully enjoy the excitement of a simulated war game.

"I can fix all models of airsoft guns and turn them into competitive weapons. There are several models and modified versions to the market but all their parts have the same principles," he says.

His satisfied clients have attested to his skill and responsibility as airsoft firearms

"He is good. I can fix my trouble of my service firearm anytime but not with my airsoft rifle. With him around, my 'baby' is always in fighting condition," says PO1 Geronimo Pelicano, a member of a group of local policemen that is into airsoft war games not only as a sport but also as a practice for tactical maneuvers.

Airsoft weapons are exact replicas of high-powered firearms which use 6-mm plastic BB (ball bearings), each weighing 0.2 gram, for their projectiles.

These toys have been classified by the Philippine National Police as special types of air guns.

Airsoft guns have three basic types: spring, electric and gas-powered.

The airsoft gun craze started in Japan in the mid-70s when people were prohibited by the state from owning guns.

AIRSOFT gun enthusiasts are dressed in full battle gear like a real soldier in simulated war game.

To give one a feel of firing a real gun, Japanese manufacturers designed and created replicas for use in simulated battles.

Tinkering with his own airsoft assault rifle triggered his interest in seriously studying the craft, says Caliwara.

"All toy gone bad's should maintain their guns in good condition. Avoid dropping them because they're not real guns. Lubricate gun parts regularly to maintain them in good condition so that you can always enjoy the game," says Caliwara, also called "Trooper" by the local airsoft community.

Caliwara, a college graduate who was formerly connected with a construction firm, recalls that his penchant for tinkering his own airsoft assault rifle had triggered his interest in seriously studying the craft.

He started his airsoft gunsmith profession in 2000 after he finished a two-month seminar sponsored by Hal Airsoft, then the leading distributor of high-end airsoft guns in the country.

Caliwara's gunsmith shop is located in the corner of the GAG headquarters in Barangay 3 in the northern part of the city.

The gunsmith charges his client P500 for basic modification jobs mostly on newly purchased guns to add more firepower to the weapon.

During the initial years of local airsoft war games very few in early 2000's. Caliwara says he normally charged P1,000 to P1,7000 for basic modification jobs on high-end guns.

"But now, some airsoft gun owners are the ones doing the modification and repair jobs," he says with a chuckle.

According to Caliwara, prices of original Japanese-made airsoft guns ranged from P15,000 to P30,000 per unit.

"Once the owner starts modifying the parts to add more firepower, he will have to spend approximately the same amount," he adds.

He says China-made guns are much cheaper with the prices ranging from P5,000 to P9,000 per unit but upgrading the gun parts will cost a few thousand pesos more.

He advised airsoft gun enthusiasts to maintain the velocity of the pellets from 450 up to 500 feet per second (FPS) only.

"If the gun is too powerful, it will be extremely painful for their opponents, especially if the weapon is fired at 10 feet or more. The player will be incurring enemies instead of gaining friends. The main goal of constituting camaraderie among all airsoft players will be defeated," Caliwara says philosophically.

Contrary to popular belief, he says, airsoft guns can not be converted into real ones.

"They may have the same looks. But in their parts and functions, there's a big difference," the gunsmith explains.

He also advises airsoft gun buffs to have two sets of firearms: a powerful one for open field war game and another one for closed quarter combat.

With the advent of more war game enthusiasts, the prospect of more modification jobs awaits Caliwara.

"But this is no permanent profession. I'm only here because war game using airsoft guns is now the fad. I love the job. Transforming airsoft guns into mean war machines gives me pleasure," he explains.

With the introduction of new and much cheaper Chinese-made airsoft guns in the market, the gamers quickly modernized instruments, forcing police authorities to implement rules and regulations to ensure safety and transport.

For one, the velocity of plastic pellets should not exceed 350 feet per second.

MONDAY, MAY 19, 2008 PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER B4

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BUSINESS Monday

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In subprime cloud, a silver lining

By Eric S. Caruncho

NOTHING STRIKES AS MUCH FEAR IN THE hearts of businessmen everywhere as the prospect of recession. The threat, even a hint of it, entails instantaneous belt-tightening. People are forced to undertake harsh, calibrated measures to ensure the survival of their businesses.

SUMPOSO City makes space for Gerard Kalingo in its establishment in Vallejo, California. Inset: Lito Hondrores

The credit crunch, brought on by a meltdown in the US subprime market, is now spanning the economies of the most powerful country in the world.

Subprime refers to a high risk loan transaction or product, a lot of people in the United States have taken out secondary mortgages on their homes. And because the loans are considered to be "subprime"—with risks and conditions that are less than desirable to banks and financiers—the borrowers get to pay higher rates of interest.

As a result, a wave of bankruptcies and foreclosures began to sweep the country. The meltdown has gone from bad to worse, spilling over across the globe. It has been beating the podium of many in the United States, and the Filipinos would-be have no exception.

Lito Hondrores, senior vice president and general manager of Fortune Enterprise Holdings, operators of the franchised City chain of supermarkets in the United States, described how some Filipinos in California lived in terror, dreading that their homes would be taken away from them.

"At present, upon my classroom of foreclosure, (the property of a lot of people had already been foreclosed)," he said during a recent trip to Manila, adding that he couldn't imagine how a house, painstakingly paid for over the years, could be lost just like that.

"Of course, what compounded the problem is, quite a few property owners have taken out second mortgages," Hondrores said during an interview.

He explained that people began to have a hard time considering their home because the equity of their property had been turned "upside down."

"Nationwide, all homes lost their value," he said. "Some Filipinos simply had to abandon their homes as a result of the subprime debacle."

But he added that there were some enterprising Filipinos who managed to settle their mortgages and regain custody of their homes. Others appear to have even profited from the downturn, purchasing property when prices have dropped.

Where the difficult times started to set in, Hondrores recalled that more and more people began "to eat at home."

"They prefer to stay home rather than eat out," he said, observing that restaurants across the United States began to suffer huge losses in sales.

"All restaurants were affected, but the hardest hit were the casual dining restaurants," he said. "That turned out to be a good thing for supermarkets."

Hondrores grudgingly admitted that business has indeed been looking up.

"In fact, some supermarkets have expanded their hot food section to take advantage of this condition," he said, citing the economic downturn in the United States. Hot food refers to cooked, ready-to-eat goods.

"Whole Foods Market, an American supermarket, has launched an advertising campaign extolling the virtues of its hot and cold ready-to-eat food section, presenting it as a much better alternative to dining in a restaurant.

"Also, in general, food prices in the US have gone up, and more and more people are now going to supermarkets, preferring to cook their own meals," he added.

Headhunting

Last March, Seafood City Supermarket opened its 13th branch in Las Vegas.

Hondrores said that because of the "chronic nature of the company's business and the need to have Filipino employees who understand what food and services Filipinos prefer and expect—their tastes and their needs—investment efforts are often in effective because of the chronic shortage of qualified personnel in the US."

In a subsequent e-mail, he said that although "recruitment for store management and food service personnel in the US is an

SUBPRIME B4.2

PLDT sme nation Count on me, partner.

Page 01

Digital Nation, sme!

Business owners are waking up to the digital now.

The dream scenario goes something like this: Jess, a multi-branch owner of a successful convenience store chain checks the daily sales and inventory reports in the comfort of her home office.

She discovers the sales performance of her eight branch managers alternately through her cell phone as wireless landline. Incredibly on her other hand she scans emails on her BlackBerry before synching calendar appointments on her desktop.

It sounds surreal as well it should, but it wouldn't be possible without a top notch package of solutions that works behind the scenes day and night.

Helen PLDT SME Prime-time thing, it would have been a Herculean task to catch the whole ICT revolution all by herself—just one of the many factors that stood in the way of small and medium enterprise owners keen on adopting technology for profit. PLDT SME Nation holds the promise of being that much-awaited seamless ICT package for SMEs around the country.

We Know That

Technology, especially ICT, is an enabler of business isn't a new idea. But as SMEs attest from the bulk of businesses in the country, having more access of ICT's leading benefits, industry experts predict a snowballing momentum for wider acceptance that's just around the corner. Five years ago international technology firms confirmed that a large portion of SMEs still had to adopt "basic e-commerce tools such as internet-based solutions." Today, free and self-service are steadily outlying buyers and sellers into a larger virtual marketplace.

With the arrival of PLDT SME Nation, most Internet stumbling blocks for SME ICT adoption have gone by the wayside. Instead of 3 Mainstay high-level needs, power solutions, and market-wide interference in ICT business-process integration. What SMEs have the technologies around but have afraid to invest or how it all worked or plugged into their businesses.

Today, PLDT SME Nation delivers bundled solutions with full-time support system. A ready and reliable tech partner for biz, Business owners is a convincing and convincing processes. It improves technology for what it really is—a useful tool and enabler indispensable for business, hardly the unreliable monster of pens and wiring. And as easy as it is, inconceivably plugged into the owner's everyday business operations, the difference in workflow and productivity takes location as a whole is night and day.

ICT: Fun and Fuzzy

SME Nation solutions such as Biopo Work and WiMP Anywhere maximize management and reporting, especially for small and manufacturing operations. In addition to their office-based managed PBX voice platforms, the superior PLDT Wireless Landline and wireless coverage WiMP Limit can't optionally provide full-time mobile voice communication. WiMP BlackBerry and PLDT Bullbase leverage on branded "internet-plus" coverage with mobile email and Internet that has the longest reach and reliability anytime, anywhere.

SME's can also operate a virtual office right from their homes with PLDT MyOffice Biz which has mobile management other providers and in the less control of the "broadband" concept.

Businesses can fully enjoy the web site by getting with PLDT's Biz Builder, an on-line easy-to-use website building tool to put up a professional web presence in minutes their global market need.

Buyers, consumers and offline shop owners can even create their own WiFi hotspots they can set up in a DIY with MyOffice Biz's managed wireless solutions.

And for SME's that want an entire "Plug and Play" IT department set up exists there optimization PLDT MyAP delivers a networking from the most branded computers and hardware, customer service and software.

The Knowledge Economy

"We are in the area of the knowledge economy where those who have access to ICT are closely connected to a virtual network regardless of geographic location, race or gender," according to the United Nations Industrial Development Program (UNIDO) in its report, "Why Should I Connect: Embed ICTs into SME Policy."

"SMEs need ICT to integrate into the global supply chain, but for outsourcing business and increase productivity."

The same report even cited Korea which registers with just a 30% "industrial information index"—although that country already has a relatively advanced technological base for its 3 million SMEs. According to the UNIDO figures across the region still have room to improve.

Here in the Philippines, respected IT industry experts have long championed on the concept of "digital literacies" leading into a "digital nation" and then eventually a "digital ASEAN".

PLDT's VVP Eric R. Alfonso, Head of Customer Sales and Marketing Group said that "To meet the challenges of these competitive times, making global communications more accessible like the use of technology, is a dominant of competitiveness are only to the local business environment, but more importantly on a global scale."

As the PLDT SME Nation spreads its continuing ICT project in SMEs nationwide, a wider audience of business owners will finally realize the dream.

People, Events & Products

Edna Antes Espinosa

It's better to be safe with Sony Bluetooth

IN A WORLD WHERE MOST things are on the move, even the thought of untangling cables dangling in your favorite research using a regular hi-fi system or radio seems to be getting more and more. This is why Sony has made it possible for you to wirelessly enjoy and share your tunes anywhere, anytime. Welcome to Bluetooth World.

"Sony Bluetooth World redefines how Philippine fools at the way audio products can be used in their daily lives, tapping our **technologies' potential and further bonding them with stylish inspiration,**" Sony Philippines deputy director for home audio Ruben Arnold Bulan said.

In order to display their non-tolerance to this quest, Sony has developed sleek Bluetooth-enabled products such as VAIO laptops, Sony Ericsson mobile phones, Bluetooth headsets, portable speakers, and headsets, among others, as well as entertainment, emotions, and a special digital media post for products that sport Bluetooth ready.

"The beauty with Sony Bluetooth transmitters and receivers is that **everyone can now experience** high-quality wireless personal or shared audio, even when using products that weren't originally built with Bluetooth technology," Daniela Lipuzzo, Sony Philippines marketing officer for personal audio, cited. "All you have to **do is plug it to your portable media** device, and enjoy, regardless of where you are."

This means that your favorite Sony-style Walkman such as the new S120 Series one, now be paired with Bluetooth portable speakers or micro hi-fi stereo via a transmitter. The same holds true for a Bravia Home Theater, which can now play media from your Sony Ericsson cell phone or Vaio laptop minus the wires, with the help of the Sony Bluetooth Digital Media Port. A whole range of other products can be integrated, too. Just check www.sonyeurope.ph.

However, behind the chic design, the crisp and clear tunes produced, and product integration, comes freedom not only from tangled wires, but from wound dangers as well.

"Many robbers use consumers' safety while still offering superior audio entertainment. Some examples of unwanted incidents that can be avoided with the proper use of Bluetooth product are accidents due to cell phone use while driving, searching for consumers, **even tripping and accidental shock because** of erroneous connecting or dismantling of wires, especially by children," Bulan explained.

The simplest scenario is in a kitchen console, especially for busy multiphiles out there. But if you're the type of music lover who brings his or her beats on the go, and still demands for audio quality like no other, without the chains brought about by wires, it's definitely better to be safe with Sony.

For more details, call Sony's customer contact center at 635-7000 or 0917-8677000, or log on to www.sonyemes.ph or e-mail it to callph@ap.sonyemes.

SMART INAUGURATES SM MUNTINLUPA WIRELESS CENTER

Leading wireless services provider Smart Communications Inc. (Smart) recently inaugurated its 26th satellite office in the National Capital Region. Located at the 2nd level of the newly opened SM Center Muntinlupa in Muntinlupa City, the Smart Wireless Center is the 2nd of its kind in the city, with two other facilities located in Alabang Town Center and Festival Supermall. Smart currently has over 20 NCR nationwide, with customer care representatives ready to accommodate subscriber needs and concerns, from sales to customer assistance to payments. The inauguration was graced by Muntinlupa City Vice Mayor Antonio Buendia. Also shown at SMC Executive Skunkhouse opened in November 2005 and is the 30th SM mall built in the Philippines. Shown are (from the right) SM Retail head for customer management operations Melvin B. Aguinaldo (2nd from right) cutting the ceremonial ribbon to formally inaugurate the Smart Wireless Center. Also shown were Smart head for sales and distribution Reg T. Jimenez (right) and Ms. Alice Javier (2nd from right).

Frugal housewife wins P1-M PSBank fortune

ESTELA CASIMIRO, A 62-year-old housewife, never thought her years of frugal living would one day lead to a P1-million fortune.

On the back of the raw expenses, Estrada had been saving religiously for her family's future. Now she is the 22nd monthly millionaire in PSBank's Monthly Millions raffle promo. Her raffle number was drawn April 1 at the PSBank Center in Makati City.

Estrada is a head and lung cancer survivor of Pilipinas Shell's Tabaco branch. She opened an account very back in 1982, almost 20 years ago. She has always trusted PSBank for her **banking needs. In fact, when** she was just an 18-year-old teenager, she opened an account at the PSBank Quiapo branch. She was then a P1,000.

"Nagulat ako nung nanawag yung branch manager ng PS-Bank E Tabaco para sabihin na nanalo ako ng 1 million. Akng sina, ayaw ko yung biruinnila," exclaimed the pioneer 2nd millionaire.

The P1-million prize was truly a fitting reward for years of living a simple life coupled with prudent savings at PSBank.

A mother of four, Estrada has always taught her children to live a simple life. "Pinaalala ko sa mga anak ko na simplehin yung pamumuhay, walang mga luxury na yan. Basta meron lamang makakain at araw-araw. Yung parang sapat, masasabi ko na."

Leading a simple life also **means spending birthday cele**brations on a tight budget. "Kahit 1 lang magbigayan, pag may okasyon lamang ng birthday, naglalabas lang ako ng pera," Estrada said.

Frugality was second nature for the family, especially with Estrada being managing the re-

FAMILY. Pilipinas Shell's Estrada Tabaco (2nd from right), poses with a mock-up check representing his P1-million prize in the PSBank Monthly Millions raffle promo.

sources. "Hindi kami nagpadala at noon po lang, nag-iipon na kami ng mismo ko para pag may kailangan kami, mayroon kaming mahahalata." The problem **humanrelle lessen that whatev**er money is saved could be used for the future, especially during emergencies.

However, she and her family **realized the real value of hav**ing a substantial financial savings when they started a Multilinel business more than 20 years ago. They started saving coins in a piggy bank which served as piggy banks.

When the customers were filled with coins, they deposited the money in Estrada's **PSBank account.** "Pag napuno na yung lalagyan nonin, dinadala ko sa bang para sa bangko. Kasi yung mga coins yun pero kinuha yung para, minsan nagpapalit."

At PSBank, she found the service quick and the staff friendly. "Sa PSBank, ang tawag sa akin kolhgar, 'di salad sa ibang **dangko na ang tawag a cash.** Sayang 4 Quote lang." It was all she needed to prove that she went to the right banking institution.

Years went by and low savings grew, paving the way for the family to purchase a jeepney and a tricycle and start a modest-budget business later years ago. Today, their business and savings affords her family to live a more comfortable life.

But more than establishing their livelihood, Estrada's financial savings proved most beneficial in giving her children the college education they need, to which she and her husband are grateful for. Now the couple's four children are already successful in their chosen careers.

Estrada plans to spend part of her P1-million prize on home renovations. A larger purchase however, as always, will be saved, kept in a PSBank time deposit account.

To celebrate her newfound **fortune, the new millionaire** plans to throw a modest affair for her family with the usual pinakbet.

Lecture series in real estate investing

WITH THE UPWARD TREND OF REAL estate rates, moneyed individuals should **seek ways** for savings or investments that would protect them against the diminishing values of the currency or its purchasing power and which, at the same time, provide a good and acceptable return. Putting one's money in real estate is one of the best alternatives to investments. However, in the amount of money, it is not fun to be learned before investing in the real estate.

As such, there is a strong and urgent need to guide incoming beginners and prospective real estate investors, lessors, dealers and developers as well as the seasoned from the novice **misbehaviors of low-making investments.**

A series of lectures on the different how-to's of investing in real estate will be conducted by the Virtual Institute of Real Estate for prospective investors, developers, landowners and **allay professionals who are required to gain** sufficient insights and confidence to finally implement proposed real estate investments. The lectures will basic the ABCs of real estate principles and avoid costly mistakes normally committed by inexperienced investors, and thus guide them to a pleasant and successful real estate business.

Numerous issues concerning real estate investment such as the opportunities, joint ventures, government sales, property management, taxation and marketing would be discussed in this series of seminars to be conducted on June 9, 11, 16, 18, 23, 25, 30 and July 2 from 1:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. at the Makiling Function Room, 2nd floor, Silan's Restaurant (near exit of Gloriosa 21, Ayala Center, Makati City.

The topics, which may be attended separately and are all stand-alone are as follows: **June 9-Learning to Real Estate: Opportuni**ties, Techniques and What are Needed to Succeed; June 11-Property Valuation (1-Practical Valuation of Real Properties); June 16-Joint Ventures and Syndications for Real Estate Projects; June 18-How to Rent and Manage A Successful Real Estate Brokerage Company; June 23-Making Big Money in Distressed Properties; June 25-Property Development and I.R.U.R. Rules; June 30-Taxation of Real Estate Transactions; July 2-Disincentives of Natural Properties: How to Maximize Income of Natural Properties.

The Lecture Series is accredited by PIT for

Naitas readies for PITF's rise into global travel event

THE PHILIPPINE INTERNATIONAL Tourism Fair (PITF) will soon evolve into an annual global travel event involving both buyers and exhibitors from other countries as a business-to-business network with local players.

This was revealed by the National Association of Independent Travel Agencies (Naitas), organizer of the PITF 2006 slated at the Cebu International Convention Center, Mandaue City, from June 26 to 28.

PITF chair Angel Ramon Begnot said the event, now on its second year, would soon emerge as an international travel fair similar to those held annually in Japan, Russia, Spain and Switzerland where countries from various parts of the world could participate as exhibitors.

"This development comes from the recent signing of a memorandum of agreement in Japan between the DOT (Department of Tourism) and Philippine **realizing PITF a yearly** event and the official name of Tourism (Travel Market Exchange)," Begnot said.

To be managed by DOT marketing arm Philippine Convention and Visitors Corp. (PCVC), **Tourism brings together the local sell**ers and foreign buyers of travel packages to conduct business transactions involving the latest tourism products in the international market.

"Tourism will be held during the PITF 2006, **with the participation of 200 local sellers and** 120 top-quality foreign buyers, led by China," Begnot added.

"But for this year, foreign participation in PITF will be limited to buyers of local tour **packages as we prepare for the fair's eventual** international status in 2007, the biggest international travel fair with global exhibitors. This will have to be on or before 2007," Begnot explained.

The MOA on PITF was signed at the sidelines of the Asia World Travel Fair, an international tourism event where the Philippines has been regularly participating.

The PITF also includes seminars, lectures and social functions that promote and generate business opportunities.

Some included in the seminars is a specialists on adventure tourism, highlighting land-wandering in Zambales, Cebu and Batanganas, wakeboarding in Batangas, surfing in Siargao, La Union and Boracay, and scuba-diving in Camotes Sea.

Launched in Germany last March, this adventure tourism campaign involves three major harness physical activity, cultural aspect of the community and respect and appreciation of the natural environment thus making it a pro-nature and pro-environment enterprise," Begnot pointed out.

Prior to its scheduled launch at the PITF, a **tourism awareness seminar will be held in** Cebu City, coming from June 2 to 4 involving foreign speakers.

Earlier, DOT Secretary Ace Durano underscored the bright prospects in adventure **tourism, citing the huge 8 million** kid market in the United Kingdom alone.

Supported by the DOT and its attached agencies PCVC and the Philippine Tourism Authority, the PITF is being organized by Naitas, **the country's biggest travel industry association** with more than 1,000 members nationwide.

The PITF promises the country's travel and tourism destinations, products and services through exhibits, pre-scheduled business meetings during Tourism, B2B networking during social functions, and covering the latest market trends and best industry practices through its forums and seminars.

CFA rolls out free training for finance professors

CFA SOCIETY OF THE PHILIPPINES, THE PREmier association that promotes competence, professionalism, and the highest ethical standards in the Philippines' investment and finance professions, is rolling out its free teaching-training program to prepare the finance professors in the Philippines for the upcoming 7th Intercollegiate Finance Competition (CFE) from September to October 2006. Organized by the Financial Executives Institute of the Philippines, IFC 2006 will be participated by by local universities in Asia. The professors who would attend the seminar can request for a complimentary set of CFA books for Level 1, 2, and 3, courtesy of CFA Institute in Virginia. CFA Philippines will be in University of Mindanao (Davao) on May 12 and 13. Further interested professors may log on to www.cfapinoy.org or call 0907-3321111.

GEP compliance and will focus on forester requirements Section 3. Cruz, who has more than 40 years in construction, engineering, construction, management and education. Cruz is also a licensed real estate consultant and 1st and 9th placer in the real estate appraiser's and broker's board examinations respectively, and was granted by Muntinlupa City Vice Mayor Antonio Buendia. Also known as GMC Executive, SM Supermarket Muntinlupa opened in November 2005 and is the 30th SM mall built in the Philippines. Shown are (from the right) SM Retail head for customer management operations Melvin B. Aguinaldo (2nd from right) cutting the ceremonial ribbon to formally inaugurate the Smart Wireless Center. Also shown were Smart head for sales and distribution Reg T. Jimenez (right) and Ms. Alice Javier (2nd from right).

Germ, chemical-free pools now made affordable

ELECTROMEX INC IS THE COUNTRY'S first and only Saltwater Chlorine Generator that uses ion to restrict treatment of pools, converted inside and deep well systems. And its process is affordable, he said, P75,000.

Ozone is accepted globally for its germ and virus-killing properties. It's 300 times more efficient than chlorine. It also removes odor, rust, color, dirt, and heavy metals such as lead, mercury and iron that can cause deadly diseases such as cancer and dysentery. Ozone does away with expensive and potentially dangerous chlorine, muriatic acid and corrosive soda forever.

Chlorinators Ozonators are plug and play, cost-effective, safe and reliable. The Ozonator saves given a reduction in excessive chemical and electrical costs in less than a year.

Electromex also builds ultra-compact, high-capacity (1,000 gallons per day) **complete water refilling stations using alkaline** mineral water for only P150,000. Electromex also manufactures ozone air purifiers that kill germs that cause odors in hotels, hospitals, schools, and offices without using toxic chemicals and filters.

Log on to www.electromexinc.com, or call 572-5002, 479-61-44 or 572-5450 for a free demonstration.

Second generation takes over 30-year-old property firm

Taps marketing man to build P5 billion lifestyle place in Tagaytay

QUINTO Ortea, Group president, Major Holdings and Atty. Maria Ortea, founder, Major Holdings Group

THE INITIALS OF his name MAO, is the first name of the legendary Chinese conquistador hero and yet Mario A. Ortea, the lawyer-builder and property developer is a capitalist who firmly believes in the values of hard work, love of family and a passion for excellence.

He had long envisioned to provide not just a roof for every Filipino, but affordable homes in secure and gated residential communities.

Thus, almost 30 years ago, in pursuit of his vision, Major Properties, an integral part of the Major Holdings Group was incorporated and began its pioneering work in building communities and property development. The company was the builder of many prestigious landmarks—Tagaytay Highlands Golf and Country Club, Sta. Elena Golf Community, Calyptow Bay Makati (formerly MacArthur)—and the developer of the La Pinoz Stone and Country Resort.

All these values—deep abiding love of family, perseverance and hard work and an uncompromising passion for excellence—awakened and well learned created a lasting impression on Quinto, MAO's son and heir apparent, trained with an MBA from the International Business School, Thunderbird and after having had his taste of the challenges of the corporate world in the United States, Quinto decided that the best place to start just under his mark but to make a difference was here in the Philippines, where family and home truly is.

His return was auspicious because at about the same time, his dad, capitalist MAO, decided to rejoin his mentor, Bobby Goggin to take on newer challenges and opportunities in another dimension of his prolific eternal career.

So today there is a new man at the helm of the Major Holdings Group. A young man raised to continue the vision and legacy of his father but with his own imprint and creative approaches most especially in the areas of strategic planning, information technology, transformation and energy.

As part of his massive asset initiatives, Quinto has established a new business venture, Landmasters Properties Inc. Through Landmasters, he aims to maximize the synergies of both companies and to fully integrate marketing concepts and tools into their total corporate approach. Although originally envisioned to be a sales and marketing company, Landmasters's cluster in the near future will also involve property and community development.

Landmasters Properties is headed by real estate marketer, Estelle Perez Jr.

Sonsona, the first collaboration between Quinto and EPJ, promises to be a lifestyle destination like no other. The direct line real estate takeover is headed in the outskirts of Tagaytay City in Cavite. The Major Holdings Group, through its subsidiary Major Properties is set to develop the country's first arts, entertainment and tourism destination as well as a premiere commercial and residential enclave, south of Manila.

This P5 billion peso project will be home to 29 five to 30-story condominium hotels, five of which will be Mondani. The master planned environment boasts of a Belagio Hotel—inspired dancing fountain now playing with laser lights, the country's first observation tower in Sentosa, Singapore style, man-made lagoons with kayaks and water bikes, a state of the art country club and sports academy and a man-made beach with its very own wave machine. To complete the amenities, retail shops and restaurants will be located within the site to address the needs of both residents and visitors. Truly the first of its kind in the Philippines.

For advance information about the project, call (632) 894-1907 or visit our website, http://www.landmasterspropties.net.

FEATURES IN BRIEF

Magnolia is multi-awarded chicken

MAGNOLIA CHICKEN WAS RECENTLY AWARDED THE SEAL OF EXCELlence by the National Commission for Mind Establishments and Inclusiveness (Nacmeinc). It was the only brand in the Hall of Fame rank that received the prestigious honor this year.

The brand has won in the Best Meat Establishment category more than five times, elevating it to the Hall of Fame in 2003. A result of meeting the standards of the Nacmeinc.

2007 was a banner period for the country's outstanding chicken, both in terms of food safety and quality management system. The company embarked on a series of programs that implemented better food safety management and its work on achieving the coveted ISO 22000.

The Magnolia Chicken Hercules Complex processes the chicken products from maintenance of grow-out operations to high industry ratings to earn the Seal of Excellence award. In previous years, the distinction was given to the cleanest plant but the award has since evolved to include environmental management and operating permits for local government.

Chicken products sourced from PP and Brazil are treated international-ity, according to its Antonio, VP for Operations. "We are looking at Japan, our major customer, and we are also hoping to meet the growing demand locally, by upgrading our facilities and systems and offering more products."

Nestle promos draws 300,000 entries

NESTLE "Give-Me-A-Name Frozen Dessert" promo is probably one of the most successful marketing campaigns in the country this year.

It was a three-month promo aimed at finding the perfect name for the newest Nestlé frozen dessert consisting of chocolate, watermelon, and orange flavors. And 27-year-old Maribelle Hendrix finally thinks so in the contest with her "Scrumbelicious" name entry.

With approximately 300,000 entries from different parts of the country, Nestlé "Give-Me-A-Name" promo created an impact among consumers.

Ninety percent of the total entries for the contest were sent through SMS while the rest of the entries were tallied via the drop boxes at the participating stores across the country. A huge percentage of the entries came from the Greater Manila Area.

"Consumer response was really overwhelming," says Angel Mendoza, consumer marketing executive of Nestlé Ice Cream.

Nestlé "Give-Me-A-Name" promo is the first of its kind in the country. Aside from its big prizes (P100,000, three Nokia 3250 and Nintendo Wii), it earned the support of numerous consumers because of its unique concept.

"Nestlé Ice Cream is the first brand to launch this type of contest. I think people liked the fact that they could participate in naming our new product that's why they were enticed to join," Mendoza added.

After the success of the promo, Nestlé says the creation of exciting product innovations is next in the ice cream industry. This can also pave way to the participation of consumers in creating new products.

"I think the Nestlé Give-Me-A-Name Frozen Dessert promo can be an inspiration in making consumers a part of developing new products," Mendoza added.

Further more, according to Mendoza, consumers can expect more exciting promos and product innovations from Nestlé Ice Cream.

Time moves fast for couple's venture

Text and photos by Marcus Cinco
Inquirer Southern Luzon

SAN PEDRO, LAGUNA—Who would have thought that a few clicks on the Internet would bring couple Rudyard and Judith Cinco (not related to the author) fame and fortune?

From a Multiply site, or personal banner, the Cincos now run three outlets of Rugged Fashions in malls. The couple is the sole authorized dealer of the Claudia and Alonzo Chrissy timepieces in the Philippines.

In July last year, Judith retired from her job as a training and development manager thinking that office stress and fatigue were delaying her pregnancy. Yet, she wanted to start a home business that would not be as demanding as her previous job.

After buying goods to sell such as China-made wallets and perfumes from the Internet, but the first few attempts flopped.

Determined to put her savings into something lucrative, Judith gave it another try with the Claudia and Alonzo Chrissy watches.

"At first I was really hesitant because they (suppliers) were requiring a big bulk for the initial order, and I hadn't seen the watches."

After haggling from 1,000 down to 50 pieces for the initial order, Judith started selling to friends. She and her husband were surprised that all 50 units were immediately sold out.

They formalized their local name, Rugged Fashions, in September.

Claudia and Alonzo Chrissy timepieces are fashion watches manufactured in Malaysia but use Japanese mechanisms.

Via Multiply

Starting as home-based entrepreneurs, most of the couple's transactions were done over the Internet.

Judith created a Multiply account where they made their first sales.

Multiply is an online social networking service commonly used to share photos, videos, or blog entries to the person's direct contacts. It also has a module on Marketplace that allows users to display interests in purchases.

"I started to get good impressions from (online) buyers, which served as our ticket to inviting more people to buy Claudia and Alonzo Chrissy watches."

Buyers would also volunteer to be added to their contact list for regular updates on new watch models and designs.

The payment mode is similar to eBay.com, a popular online auction and shopping website. Buyers deposit payment over the bank and the merchandise is delivered to them through a courier service. Shipping usually takes overnight if the buyer is within Manila and two to three days to those outside the metro.

Judith shares the pros and cons of an online business. Not having to leave the house and still earning is an advantage to her. She also notices a quick turnover though Multiply because it allows them to reach more number of buyers/users.

The challenges, however, is assuring the buyers that the business is not a scam and that they are getting quality products and what they paid for.

"What we have established is the integrity and credibility of the business," Judith says.

The Cincos encourage those who have already purchased their products or join their impression and comments on the Multiply account as a testimony of a fair transaction with the buyers.

Consignment

After a month of working online, the couple decided to join trade fairs and bazaars.

Rudyard and Judith ordered supplies almost everything which increased from 50 to hundreds and later to 2,000 watches per month.

It was also through the bazaars that they were able to locate dealers from Manila, Tacloban, Iligan, Naga, and Cebu.

By January, Rugged Fashions opened its outlet in Rugged Deco at the Podium and then in Cinderella at SM Mega Mall and Glorietta.

Judith says they try to use a "multi-approach to maintain visibility in the market" through the Internet, bazaars and a store.

She says outlets in malls give their buyer more security in case they want to avail of the warranty or service for the watches.

Judith describes fashion watches as usually colorful, detailed with gem stones, and with design materials to both male and female users.

"A new trend in the Philippines today is shifting from conventional to fashion watches that suit one's personality and attire," Judith says.

While the first growth of the business, the couple now looks forward to getting more dealerships.

BOTH 26, Rudyard and Judith Cinco wear only one timepiece brand these days.

In subprime cloud, a silver lining

Pretenge B4-1

ongoing process, there continues to be a dearth of qualified and experienced personnel who have a strong understanding of Philippine behavior—their likes and dislikes ... personnel who have the ability to recognize the factors that motivate Filipinos to buy the company's products."

Hence, once a year, Seafood City executives would return to the country in search of supermarket managers and other key personnel.

Interviewing was in town two weeks ago precisely for that reason. On his handholding expedition, he made the rounds of supermarkets and management services looking for people to work for them at Seafood City.

Sourcing supplies

His stories how strongly the US-based Filipinos feel about filling their shelves with products helped straight from the Philippines, they still can't get enough of what they need.

"Sorry, we can buy as much as we can in the Philippines," Hon-Ceviso said. "I don't know what's wrong. It's not our design. But we're getting very little from the Philippines.

"We get canned meat and processed foods, but that's it. There are not too many companies here that are HACCP compliant," he added, referring to Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points, a registry measure that has been set in place in the United States to ensure food safety, especially to avoid outbreaks.

"We don't know. Asks there's not a whole lot of supply here," Hon-Ceviso said, believing that this and agriculture products in the country may only be enough for Philippine consumption.

As a result, the company has been sourcing much of what they need from Vietnam, Thailand and, especially Taiwan.

"We really don't have much choice in the matter," Hon-Ceviso sounded almost apologetic. "With size for instance, we get our supply mostly from Thailand."

Although Philippine brands may still be found on their shelves, similar products from other parts of Asia are now taking up as much, if not more, shelf space than those from the Philippines.

"We think foreign products are only some three MT (bill), yeah is, we get much of our supply from Taiwan. We also get dispite straight from the US and Taiwan, more from the Philippines."

Lately, Seafood City has increased the quantity of fish products it buys from Vietnam.

"I don't think the Philippines can beat the prices of Taiwan and Vietnam. On the other hand, maybe the fish supply in the Philippines is not enough to warrant exporting to other countries. I don't know. But we'll still try and source what we need here as much as we can.

"We just wish there were more," he added.

Pride

At present, Seafood City is steeped in community work.

"We support Gilas in project of the Ayala Foundation and Edward Kallaga in an effort to give back to the country," Hon-Ceviso said.

"We are restarting a Gawad Kalinga program in Manaoag, Negros Occidental," he said. "There are already 18 houses where the building stopped a few years back. We now this as a great opportunity to step in and lend a hand ... finish the job."

He also cited how the company supported OK builders from the United States by sponsoring their trip to and from the Philippines.

For the people behind Seafood City, the "giving back" is what is important to them most.

"Through Gilas and OK, we have really found a more meaningful and effective way to give back to our country," Hon-Ceviso said.

"Kids' parents, we still have our roots here in the Philippines. We are still Filipinos and are very proud of that."

BUSINESS Monday

Seaweed production on the decline

Rising temperature of seawater causes huge supply drop

DAYTOP of the production shortfall, the seaweed processors also had to contend with the rising prices of seaweed.

By Irene R. Sino Cruz
Inquirer Visayas

CEBU CITY—YEARS ago, the seaweed sector was considered an emerging industry that had helped improve the lives of thousands in some areas in Mindanao, especially in Zamboanga and Sulu.

However, the sector now faces a critical period as the seaweed production, which has been declining steadily last year, has gone down considerably starting January.

The declining production, on top of the growing demand for the seaweed from China, has affected the operations of the country's seaweed processors.

Processed seaweed or carrageenan is a binding or thickening ingredient used in most processed dairy products, chocolate drinks, toothpaste, air freshener and pet food, among others.

Ramon G. Dakay, president of the Seaweed Industry of the Philippines and chief executive officer of the Shoreline Marketing Corp., admits that the shortage has an adverse impact on Philippine processors.

Dakay discloses that the local processors have lower production as it could no longer get enough raw seaweed.

Slowdown

He cites as an example the Shoreline group that used to process 40 tons of carrageenan daily related to about P350,000 but the company's production has dropped to 16 tons to 20 tons following the shortage of raw seaweed, Dakay said.

"During a good harvest, one sales could even reach $400,000 daily but now we are only doing $80,000 a day," he says.

Dakay tells the Inquirer that Shoreline had to shut down its facilities for at least 10 days in February due to lack of raw seaweed.

DAKAY

"We have suppliers, not only in the Philippines, but also in Indonesia and Malaysia but we could not get the raw seaweed we need," Dakay says.

While the Philippines could get raw seaweed from Chile and Indonesia, the seaweed production in these two countries could not fill the shortfall in the production of the Asian countries, he adds.

On top of the production shortfall, the seaweed processors also had to contend with the rising prices of raw seaweed.

Philippine seaweed, euchemeus cottonii, was sold at $900 per metric ton in 2007 but the price has gone up to $1,600, Dakay says.

Even Indonesia cottonii now commands a higher price, from $900 per metric ton in 2007 to $1,600 this year, he added.

Warmer sea

Dakay attributes the lower seaweed production to the increased temperature of seawater.

He explains that the ideal temperature for seaweed is below 28° Celsius but the temperature at the seaweed farms has gone above 28°.

Dakay says the seaweed production has declined by as much as 50 percent in some areas in the country.

The Philippines' raw seaweed production averages 120,000 metric tons annually while Indonesia's seaweed production is about 80,000 metric tons annually, he adds.

Aside from the rising seawater temperature, the seaweed farmers also have to contend with higher production costs, such as the increasing prices of fuel and potassium hydroxide (KOH), Dakay explains.

The seaweed farmers have been hit by the rising fuel prices since they have to use motorboats for the planting and harvesting of the seaweed, he adds.

Dakay also notes that price of potassium hydroxide, which is used in processing the seaweed, went up from only $800 per ton to $1,100 per ton.

Encouraged? Henrycon, proprietor of the Pagadian City-based DRT Enterprises, a firm engaged in raw seaweed trading, confirmed that the production had gone down in areas his company covers.

Henrycon says his firm had been buying seaweed from farmers in Columbio City, Pagadian City, Ozamiz City, Zamboanga del Sur and Zamboanga Sibugay.

However, he could no longer get the same volume of raw seaweed he used to get.

First time

Henrycon says that they also experienced lower seaweed production in the past years but not in this magnitude.

"This is the first time this has happened here," he points out.

He says the production had gone down by as much as 60 percent in some areas.

Henrycon attributes the decline to seawater warmer temperature and the occurrence of disease in the seaweed plantations.

"The shortage in supply has driven up the price of raw seaweed," he adds.

Farmers say the company used to supply 500 sacks to 600 sacks a month but now he would be lucky if he could get 200 sacks.

But the decline in the seaweed production has affected farmers more.

Hadji Jalaco Omar, chairman of the Western Mindanao Seaweed Industry Development Foundation (WMSIDF), notes that seaweed farmers used to earn at least P20,000 per harvest but, with the decline in seaweed production, their income could not go beyond P6,000.

But Omar notes that seaweed farmers usually enjoy good harvest from January to June, which are considered peak months for seaweed farming.

He cites the farmers' difficulty in access financing as the biggest factor in the lower seaweed production.

Government and private financing institutions have suspended lending to seaweed farmers, considered as high risk due to the peace and order condition in Western Mindanao, Omar says. "This is neither," he adds.

Because of the difficulty to access financing, seaweed farmers were forced to go to pawnshops and moneylenders who charge very high interest rates, Omar says.

The high interest rates have crippled the seaweed farmers as their face declining production and higher production inputs, he added.

Some seaweed farmers have even resorted to harvesting seaweed for rice, instead of the usual cash, Henrycon says.

He urges the government to help the seaweed farmers since they could no longer get financing from the usual financing institutions due to the drop in production.

Even the traders who used to finance seaweed farmers have become reluctant to do so since they could not be assured of a good harvest, Henrycon says.

Government help

Omar also urges government to address the concerns of the seaweed farmers as that production could go back to the previous volumes.

Some 100,000 predominantly Muslim families in coastal areas of Mindanao directly depend on seaweed for their livelihood.

The major production areas for cultured seaweed include the seaweed farms of Western Mindanao, the island provinces of Tawi-Tawi, Sulu, and Basilan, the provinces of Zamboanga del Sur, Zamboanga del Norte and Zamboanga Sibugay and Zamboanga City.

These areas account for about 75 percent of the Philippine seaweed production.

However, Dakay says there organizations had encouraged fish farmers in other areas to go into seaweed farming.

In the past, he explains, the coastal seaweed farming was only viable in the Western Mindanao areas.

He added some seaweed farmers in Bohol and Leyte, who had trained on mining optimum, have started planting euchema cottonii.

Dakay says they have encouraged farmers in the two areas to increase the area planted to cottonii.

Hopefully, he says, this would alleviate the shortage in the supply of raw seaweed.

'Regions need own media platforms'

By Tonette Orejas
Inquirer Central Luzon

CITY OF SAN FERNANDO—INDEPENDENT Embroidering.

Levy Laxa recalled getting such reactions from his friends in 2000 when he proposed to embark on a project that has never been done in Central Luzon: Set up a regional television station.

"What for?" they asked. "Central Luzon is just a corridor that links [Metro] Manila to the more exotic North," they said," Laxa said, ignoring the inner cynical of them.

But the 57-year-old businessman went on.

A year since CLTV36 broadcast live over the region's seven provinces and 13 cities on May 16, Laxa, chair of the Central Luzon Broadcasting Corp., that runs CLTV36 and the radio stations dwRW and dwLuzon, has endeavor continued to raise eyebrows.

"Some people would call it nuisance. Others would say adventurism. In CLTV36, we call it commitment," he said in a speech during CLBC's first anniversary celebration.

Laxa is also president of the government-owned Clark Development Corp.

Speaking on phone patch, governors and business leaders hailed the event as the "coming of age" of regional TV in the country.

It must be so because CLTV36 came at a time when national TV networks reign in the media landscape and cable TV took a heavy claim for foreign shows and movies.

There have been fund constrict.

"Regional receivers take the backseat," said Sonia Soto, general manager of CLTV36 and vice president of the CLBC.

"In Luzon, Central Luzon deserves to have its own TV because it is "more than a corridor."

The region, he said, continues to play a "strategic role in our national history and development."

Of the eight provinces that first revolted against Spanish colonialism, four—Bulacan, Nueva Ecija, Tarlac and Pampanga—are in Central Luzon.

The region took on international importance when the United States set up its military bases in Clark, Pampanga and Subic in Zambales. Filipinos made those the centers of nationalist struggles as well.

Central Luzon produced four Philippine presidents: Ramon Magsaysay of Zambales, Diosdado Macapagal and his daughter Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo of Pampanga, and Corazon Aquino of Tarlac.

Still a rice granary, the region has also become a hub of development, contributing 10 percent of the gross national product and supporting major industries through the freeports in Clark and Subic.

People Power I in 1986, said Laxa, challenged "Manila's monopoly as the center of power, commerce and communications."

"The regions are now emerging with their defined needs. Those needs are what we want to address in CLTV," he said.

"As such, it needs to harness its voice for it to be better heard. It needs a freer flow of information within or link efficiently outside. It needs its own media platform to showcase itself and this itself is a daunting task," he said.

"CLTV36 is that platform," Laxa said.

Belonged as "one region, one station," the station has narrated eight shows in its start-up year. These are "OK si Dok," "CLTV Balitaan," "Pinga (Winners are Grant Independent)," "Music Zone," "Harvest Central Luzon," "Sibol ng Lipi," "Umpleng Umpao" and "Yel."

New shows are debuting as well. These are "Magalit Tayo," "Nilong Hanapbuhay," "Sine Pyanlene in Action," "Sulong Gitnang Luzon," "Everybody Talks with Bert Y" and "Sa Mesa Business."

All features travel subjects and issues.

Soto said the shows provide "platforms for elected officials to inform their constituencies, highlight the region's rich culture, give a voice to the marginalized sectors and offer advertisers the focus to hold on local market niches."

"We're trying to always strike a balance between community service and profitable business, making CLTV36 the source of information and entertainment on how empowering truth and fairness," said Soto.

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LIFESTYLE
Editor Thelma Sioson San Juan Arts and Books Editor Lito B. Zulueta

The romance of the 'abel' Iluko

The traditional Ilocano weave has made a colorful comeback

By Rene E. Guadiz
Contributor

ABEL IS THE ILOCANO TERM that refers to the process of weaving, while inabel is the final woven product (although the terms are now used interchangeably).

Some of the earliest known pioneers of inabel are Bangar in La Union; Tagudin, Santiago and Sigay in Ilocos Sur; and Paoay, Pinili and Sarrat in Ilocos Norte.

The very name of Tagudin is apparently derived from tagud, a process of straightening/combing the cotton yarn using coconut husks.

Paoay and Sarrat are famous for their churches—Church of San Agustin in Paoay and Church of Santa Monica in Sarrat. Both being coastal towns, Paoay on the southern, Sarrat by Padsan River which drains out to the coast near Laoag), the two are known trading centers from precolonial times.

Interior designer Mel Andino is one of the resource persons in things Ilocano. He says Abraded designs, often called "tapi-tapi" because of the optical illusion caused by its diverging design, represent the waves of the sea. And ancient tribes believed the braided patterns presented them from vicious spirits...hence, their predominant use in the trunks of the region's tribes.

Some say there is no such thing as Tinggipano (also called Ilang) weave as the textiles were woven by the Ilocanos. The mountain tribes harvested their gold and beeswax for the fabrics, turning them into works of art with beautiful joinery for use in their rituals.

Others say, while the Tinggipano used to weave most of their fabrics, the patterns were mastered by the lowland Ilocanos, who eventually captured the market for fabrics. There is room for further research in this area.

Among the Tinggipano, the number and quality of blankets and fabrics were indicators of family wealth and social standing. The family's best textiles are exhibited during the wake for a deceased family member.

Because of the difference in manner of use, lowland textiles tend to wear out, while those of the tribes, brought out only occasionally, tend to last longer and in better shape. Present-day collectors make the attendee of overlooking the wearing to the owners of the fabrics.

Experts also consider the pottery to upland Ilocanos as indicative of location—the borders also signify the boundaries between

THE ROMANCE C3

ASSORTED abel cloth from Ilocos

The romance of the 'abel' Iluko

Front page 6-1

tribes and towns. The knowledgeable person would know which particular town or community made the blanket from the quality and forte of the joinery used, to the entire array one can tell whether people are from lowland or mountain communities.

The true expert would be able to identify the particular person who put the blanket together. The decorative aspect of the joinery is a given—with some made to look like a row of spokes, fingernails, circles, triangles.

'Banderado,' 'Sinakol,' brocade

For Ilocanos, the binondoro is the simplest design of all—consisting of stripes on the sides, or to the middle of the fabric. This is probably one of the oldest designs, one that is slowly going out of being; most users now preferring woven and more elaborate designs. In Ilocos Sur, the design is called sinakol and, until the material was originally used for sadi-kalsa, the same as old hooked weaves.

Brocade is still made in Ilocos Norte, mainly in Nagrai and Paoay, a battle of weavers says of Ilocos also manufactures a thinner cotton. Predominantly black or indigo, with patterns in white or cream, detailed to one of the original weaves of Ilocos. Rough and hardy, just like denim, it hardly wears out. There are variants in red, green and yellow; generally considered to have been owned by the richer classes.

The brocade weaves of Santiago are quite elaborate, with some colorful stampales. The pinallon—a repeating pattern of stylized geometric figures, leaves, flowers, crabs, horses and twin male and female horses—is one of the most representative and is favored by the Tinggians for their ritual blankets. The dinapet, with a "weaving design which fits the entire field of the textile," once repeating figures of two-headed frogs, rivers, mountains.

While the patterns of Bauang abel are similar, there are subtle differences in color combinations, and the thickness of the weave—from gossamer mosquito nets to thick brocades and embroidery.

There are myriad shapes—stylized stars, pineapples, grapes, turkeys, horses, even the two-headed eagle (sabiak a sun really or an omega as it sometimes becomes the bird is an icon of the symbols of the Augustinians, who were among the first missionaries in the north).

In the Bontoc epic "Lam-ang," the hero has a two-headed pet chicken called Sikalik—suggesting the image of the two-headed eagle, appropriated to illustrate the mythical bird.

The most sophisticated ones are the interwoven with very fine and subtle patterns from diamonds within diamonds, circles, squares and other geometric shapes).

Less is a plain weave, with a broad twist, as patterns are made by missing a few selected shrimp in the process of weaving. This subtlety creates a simple but beautiful contrast outside for blankets and clothing.

Bontoc blankets are known for their vibrant colors, but there are also variants in plain white or cream, with embossed designs. Recently consumers have taken a liking for these white-on-white creations, the embossed designs created by the satined color.

'Sacred blanket'

The inalam, a white diamond twill weave native to the Tinggianes, with stripes on the sides, circular designs on top and bottom, and with joinery of dots and dashes, is among the most valued because of the supernatural character attributed to it. It is ceremonially used during births and is considered "possessed by spirits."

Inalam-inspired shirts are still being made in Baoan Sur, but times being what they are, the dimensions are smaller, and the colors more garish owing to the use of mass-made dyes instead of the traditional plant dyes.

Ilocos Sur and Abra's seven corners of indigo production during the Spanish colonial era. Iguyon, the local word for "indigo," is also a place name in Abra, and Tayoman in Manila refers to the trading in the products there from during those times. The bark of the elements or comachile is traditionally used for the dark crimson red favored by Bontoks.)

The northern mountain tribes had some of the richest and most elaborate weaves, some of which have already vanished, like the dinaclocoran facial shrouds of the Isinai.

The dandalo weave, a simple white cloth with deep blue line at the sides is a light and airmesh see-through fabric that is used to this day it unsinghe-linar sinbun, with a white line in the middle, is sinamet and is used for funeral rites. They are still woven in the Ilocos lowlands and sold in the Cordillera together with sinamak (bo-ga or bahag).

Rainbow of colors

While Ilocanos seem ready to be generally severe, the colors red, yellow, green, blue and dark shades figure prominently in abel.

The material used for shirts (pandiling) is specially colorful. Even the predominantly black variants are decorated with bright shades or lines in circles, yellow, red or green. The skirt itself can be more or less straight and relatively severe with a prominent "tail" that can be tucked into the waist to form a woven silhouette.

The ladies' tops are usually hand-stitched gossamer creations of lace abaca, cotton or pina cloth. Appliqued or embroidered designs are usually sparse and geometric but there are also elaborate floral complexes.

The ensemble is usually completed with matching ring and earrings, gold (authentic) necklaces (the longer the necklace, the more formal the occasion), and understood especially.

The clothing systems of the men are limited to plain-type pants, usually indigo, black or brown, and embroidered hat or pilic for the hero or chief. Hemp-based woven materials can be quite colorful, complementing the more elaborate ladies' patterns.

The gentleman's wardrobe is completed with a simple walking stick, and the headgear called bandong or salakot for abel dress could be used a deep orange-red, and finished with elaborate basketry inside).

Looking forward

With the ready availability of cheap machine-made fabrics and ready-made clothing, abel was once a dying tradition.

In the '80s and '90s, former Sen. Imee Marcos, Irene Marcos Araneta and Lisa Araneta Marcos-Gokongwei threw with local weavers, headed by the late Aida Fernandez, to revitalize this craft through Ilocanas, an organization set up to help the weavers produce better fabrics, and to market abel to the world.

Weavers' cooperatives sustain this tradition, with the support of organizations like Caruweng Foundation and the Museo Ilocos Norte, which were also established by the Marcoses.

Ilocos Norte Gov. Michael M. Bocos supports the abel tradition as part of his initiatives for tourism, along with agriculture, health and education.

LAMP sculpture of bamboo and handmade paper by Perry Mamaril

"BANIG," woodcarving by Bailey Cuenca

An exhibit in handmade items from organic raw materials shows the rich diversity of the folk arts

'Aramid,' a fellowship in creativity

ARAMID IS DERIVED FROM the Ilocano word that means "to make or create."

It is the title of the arts and crafts exhibit in Pinto Gallery highlighting handmade items from organic raw materials. Images and new bridal fabrics from Bocos, the light sculptures of Perry Mamaril made of bamboo and handmade paper, terra-cotta vases, sculptures, ornaments and tiles, and a one-of-a-kind functional wood sculpture by Bailey Cuenca.

Bamboo is now becoming recognized for its strength and beauty, with many designers and architects rediscovering this material.

Mamaril first became known for his unique bamboo-and-paper creations that he later named "light sculptures."

Made from irregularly shaped canes of bamboo, sticks, cutouts and

"ORIGINS," by Jun Gonzales

ASSORTED terra-cotta sculptures

covered with fine handmade paper, the sculptures are in the shape of mandorlas—and gothic, at times in varied organic and geometric shapes. They are reminiscent of the Maki series of paper lanterns by the Japanese architect Noguchi, but with an undeniably Pinoy-Ilocano flavor.

For "Aramid," Mamaril has set the bar even higher with three unique creations—a world lamp, the largest and large-scale three-piece hanging lamp.

From modest beginnings as Café by the Ruins in Baguio, Mamaril and his eyeatlocos have come a long way. His sculptures have been exhibited in many parts of the world, and are available at his studio in New York and periodic homecoming shows.

He has also embarked on a separate culinary career—cooking at the celebrated Cendrillon Restaurant in New York. His culinary adventures will be highlighted during a private function at the Bale Namet Glee Heritage Village in Currimao, Ilocos Norte.

Clay

Other homtion lamps by young Ilocano artisans inspired by him are also on exhibit.

Clay is one of the earliest materials used by artisans worldwide. Our very own Mesopotamia Ina, featured on the reverse of the P1,000 bill, is one of the oldest artifacts from prehistoric Philippines.

Today artisans from all over the country preserve this age-old tradition which links us to many cultures, producing utilitarian pieces of great beauty.

The lineup of artworks by Joe Gonzales, Pablo Capati III, Anna Nacona, Rita Badillo-Gadiano, Joey de Guzman, Bene Centeno, Rina Mendoza and Ronny Cruz shows the rich diversity of terra-cotta and stoneware traditions and the many possibilities of this exciting material.

The Zen-inspired vessel furniture by Ricky Cuizon are functional artworks—unique, and sporting a charm that is attained only to handcrafted hardwood.

"Aramid" is a celebration of Filipino artistry, creativity and craftsmanship, held under the auspices of the Ilocano Foundation for the Arts, Culture and Ecology with the cooperation of the Provincial Tourism Office of Ilocos Norte.

The exhibit runs until June 4 in Pinto Art Gallery 1 Brown Shaker, Cainta Heights, Antipolo City. Call 6571415.

Madonna and Child at Joaquin Podium

"PAGMAMAHAL ni Ina," by Angel Cacnio

BY GLENN Cagandahan

IN CONNECTION WITH National Heritage Month, Galerie Joaquin Podium presents 18 paintings from leading contemporary artists such as Mario Parial, Angel Cacnio, Lydia Velasco, Dominic Rubio, Neil Campos, Jesse Benito, Vincent de Fio, Alison Lerner, Alfa Pergel.

The show, "Madonna con Nino," runs May 20-June 3 in Galerie Joaquin Podium at Unit 102-103, LG/L, The Podium, ADB Avenue, Ortigas Center, Mandaluyong.

Says Clara Andres Cruz, gallery director: "We would like to underscore view of our beautiful culture's roots which make us truly Filipinos...a mother's unselfish and unbridled love for her children."

CLOCKWISE from bottom left: Artworks by Tom Mustill, Dominic Rubio and Mario Parial

VISUAL ARTS

Conservation at Lopez

LOPEZ MEMORIAL MUSEUM SHOWCASES ITS HERITAGE OF ARO EXpertise in conservation, collection and acquisition in the exhibit, "The Soul of Its Parts." The exhibit features particular pieces from the collection which have undergone or are slated to undergo conservation, works by Hidalgo, Luna, Pacific Rim, Resa Dagot, Juvenal Sanso and Claudio Bravo. Also included is contemporary artist Jonathan Sturn's installation work taking off from the words of his father, Romulo Olazo, who is known for his "Diaphanous Series," which he began to develop in the late 1960s through the graphic art medium of printmaking. The exhibit is running at the ground floor, Benpres Building, Exchange Road corner Meralco Avenue, Pasig. Museum days and hours are Monday-Saturday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., except Sunday and holidays. Entrance fee is P50 for elementary students, P80 for high school and college students, and P100 for adults. Call 6343417 or e-mail pacsoom@skyinet.net.

Indonesia show

Filipino visual artists Raul Isidro, Hildebrando A. Perez, Ernie Velasquez and Danny Pungan have been invited by the Philippine Embassy in Jakarta, Indonesia, headed by Philippine Ambassador and Vidal Querol, to exhibit their paintings as part of the Philippine Independence celebration which opens on May 23. 6 p.m., and will run until May 26, at the Bota Fine Arts Foundation Gallery at JI Kemang Dalam, JIs A Kemang Jakarta Selatan, South Jakarta, Indonesia. From June 1-5 to June 30, the exhibit will also be showcased the Mulia Hotel in Jakarta, Indonesia.

BY JOSEPHINE Turalba

Turalba at the CCP

Josephine Turalba opens "Open Season," May 28 at the Small Gallery, Cultural Center of the Philippines. Curated by visual artist and multi-awarded production designer Leo Abaya, the exhibit is composed of new-media installations using photography, video projections, sound, painting, sculpture and performance. The exhibit will run until June 29. Call 8321125 or 8321302 for details.

A Toast to Great Taste and Healthy Heart

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Flavonoid compounds called proanthocyanidins are also found in red wine. But as recent studies have shown, Welch's 100% Grape Juice has the highest average level of proanthocyanidins per serving ever, out of all the beverages tested... and it was ranked number 1 in antioxidant capacity per serving, among all beverages tested.

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A school of artists, designers, creators

By Constantine C. Tejero

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE PHILIPPINES College of Fine Arts teaches four disciplines: Visual Communication, Painting, Sculpture and Art History. This is illustrated by the four overlapping tongues of flame in its logo designed by Rafael Jeanniton.

As part of the State University's centennial celebrations, San Miguel Corporation is sponsoring an extensive design exhibition from UP CFA curated by Tina Celeyon.

"Artista, Diskolista, Manlilikha: Pagbibigay at Pagkinang" runs until May 31 in the Tali Gallerias of the Metropolitan Museum of Manila in the Intramuros financial zip Philippine Complex, Bonifacio Global, Manila.

The show casts the spotlight on the less exalted but more popular disciplines of the visual arts, such as editorial illustration, book design, stamp and currency design, cartoography, poster-making, caricature and fashion design, canvassing, film and video production, advertising, industrial design.

Unknown to many several of our prominent artists have simultaneously excelled in these disciplines. As Celayon states: "This diversion from painting challenged the artists in a different creative arena that resulted in different audiences, and at the same time provided them with a more regular source of income."

Items are progressively arranged by year through the halls, from the pioneers of the Escuela de Bellas Artes (1st School of Fine Arts) since it opened in 1908, to the recent crop of UP CFA graduates.

As noted by Celayon: "Varied works in this exhibition are presented through decades to answer developments in the curriculum and academic history of the Visual Communication program of the school. They also reflect the popular tastes and trends of audiences and the themes and issues of the times."

Stamps and print ads

Included in the show are commercial designs of some who later became National Artists. Fernando Amorsolo, of course, is the best known, for his Mona Cremorine label design for Gimbel San Miguel in the 1930s. In fact, strained at the half-entrance is a gigantic blown-up replica of the gin bottle, while encased in a glass box are seven specimens of the bottle.

Mounted on one wall are reproductions of Amorsolo's print ads from the 1930s: first brand milk, featuring a still life of a vase of carnations and a bowl of half-eaten mangoes; and, for automobile, reproduced from Philippine Graphic Magazine, heavy soap, with a silhouette of a female nude and a blazing sun.

From 2003, we are his designs for six postage stamps. A 1912 crayon sketch for the cover of the magazine Betsamientos Filipinos, depicting a hand of half-eaten mangoes; food automobile, reproduced from Philippine Graphic Magazine, heavy soap, with a silhouette of a female nude and a blazing sun.

From 2003, we are his designs for six postage stamps. A 1912 crayon sketch for the cover of the magazine Betsamientos Filipinos, depicting a hand of half-eaten mangoes; and super-detailing on a long line of cultivars, to a fine study on perspective and tri-dimensionality through shading.

Another item is one of his opinion illustrations from the Commonwealth era. It is an editorial cartoon for The Independent in 1917, showing one Pedro Cima projecting an arrow a toddler of Chinese-looking figure and a policeman restricting him. The heading says "Is the Office Seen Behind? And we can see that this social problem has been there since time immemorial.

BONIFACIO Miranda's magazine cover

HISTORIC Francisco's costume design for "Ayat na Mar"

Costumes and books

Among Francisco is represented by his costume designs for the movies and the 1963 book cover of Nestora Agencillo's "The Writings and Trial of Andres Bonifacio." On the book cover, the figures are deliberately limned to give highlights reminiscent of the pictorial frame is drenched red and sun revolution.

The costume designs are rendered in watercolor on paper, complete with marginal notes in pencil specifying color fabric and lining. Especially, "Ayat na Mar" is the centerpiece that described for the legendary Manuel Conde film "Genghis Khan" probably unavailable).

There are also his individual costume designs for a courtesan (European), a princess (Egyptian), a Gypsy and a toreador (for "Orgullosa," the once starring "Spanish tribunes, mostly worn by well-to-do men about 1700 (incredibly old-fashioned).

José Joya is represented by designs for book jackets and the 1992 stamp of the Asean edition subjects.

Guillermo Tolentino has three stamp designs in the show, ca. 1933-1946.

Ireneo Miranda has a 1926 cover of the Graphic, which the Mexican born his illustration for school story in another magazine from the '20s.

Anselmo Bernabé, the underappreciated specialist, has the most extensive items, with 11 prints of modern; a book cover study in

GUILLERMO Tolentino's postage stamps

LARRY Alcala's "Slice of Life"

They reflect popular tastes, trends, themes, issues

modern pen, pencil and ink on paper; illustrations for books and calendars; in pen and ink, pencil, watercolor and acrylic on paper.

Angel Cacnio has studies for '80s currency, the demonstrations of 1968, 1986 and 20 centavos.

Gowns and video footage

Pilar Moreno, who graduated from the UP School of Fine Arts in 1952, showcases his design sketches in pencil, pen and watercolor on paper. These are accompanied by his side with photos of the resultant creations.

There are the 1968 wedding gown of Presidential Daughter Gloria Macapagal, the fabulous 1965 pink terno of First Lady Imelda Marcos; the 1976 sun-gown Filipiniana dress of starring Dame Margot Fonteyn; the 1980 traditional Hispanista dress of visiting Queen Sirikit of Thailand.

A fitting outfit displayed in the hall is the annual supermarket creation from the Continental Fashion Show at the Cultural Center of the Philippines in 1996—a bejeweled haute extravaganza puts Manan manufacturing chief of shows crowned with soft pleated fabric.

Leo Abaya is represented by his poster and production designs for the films "Iron Head," "Moro aswd" and "Embrodar."

Contemporary print ads come from Antonio Calma, Adboyong, Butch Uy and Allen Torres. There are even a few interactive designs, one featuring a pop-up detail.

A video monitor shows footage of talk presented by UP CFA graduates.

Cartoons and furniture

Incorporating, here' ideas, exhibited in cartoon who held a establishing UP's Department of Visual Communications, dominates the section with 10 items of his "Slice of Life" cartoon, rendered in watercolor and ink on paper.

Shihong Santos has an illustrations and cartoonist strips from Archipelago magazine, while Noel Cruhoksan has two 1989 editorial cartoons from Manila Times.

Jun Sheva has six items from the Inquirer editorial cartoons in pen on paper; "A Lipit" comic strips in pen and pencil on paper; "Pinoy Ngo" in pen and poster paint on paper.

Industrial design, which Celayon describes as "an integration of form and function in industrially produced items and artifacts that help define contemporary material culture and serve to improve the lives of people," is the most recent addition to the UP CFA curriculum.

Scattered on the aisles are the museum benches designed by Paulito Padilla Guillen, ranging from indoor furniture to wall décor; furniture designs by Dodoldia Gonzalez and Dante Cruz; books designed or illustrated by graduates.

As demonstrated by the exhibit, there are people who have fulfilled their multiple role of artist, designer and curator. There, artista, alibabaya, manlilikha.

"DUCKS Remind Me of Home," by Marina Cruz-Garcia

"WALKING Through," by Cruz-Garcia

The familiar and the unfamiliar at Alliance Française

ALLIANCE FRANÇAISE DE Manille presents "Strange Familiarities, Familiar Strangers," an exhibit of works by Marina Cruz-Garcia and Rodel Tapaya.

Works in this exhibit were made at the Vermont Studio Center, Johnson, Vermont, USA Artist Residency program March 1-April 15.

Cruz-Garcia explores spaces of the familiar and unfamiliar, depicting scenes from a new environment and linking this new ground to an old setting. The works express the experience of being a stranger in a new place and of growing familiar with it.

Tapaya focuses on people, new faces, acquaintances and friends. His monochromatic paintings are based portraits of people he met in Vermont.

Artists' reception shall be at Alliance Française de Manille's Teval Gallery on May 20. Cocktails will be served at 6:30 p.m. Exhibit ends on June 6.

Call 8527-1741 and 8527-1742 or e-mail adiongan@alliance.ph or culture@alliance.ph. Log on to www.mobilephapers.com and www.marinagarcia.com.

"PLANO" II, by Cruz-Garcia

"ANGELO," by Rodel Tapaya

Canvas at the Crucible

Sammelbones Canvas presents his second solo exhibit, "Unfinished," May 20-June 1, in Crucible Gallery 4F, Bldg. A, 1M Megamall, Mandaluyong City. Canvas's abstract paintings seek to convey the open-ended nature of "unfinished" business and works in progress while rendering a commentary on social ills brought upon by bad government. His latest offerings of mini-murals in large-scale paintings are tropical visuals of earth and nurture highlighted by bubblegum colors and aqua tones. Call 6356061 for details.

"PASMAFEE"

Manes at Blanc

Figurative artist Lobo Blanes presents his second solo exhibit, "Kontrabidista," until May 31 at Blanc 2R Crown Tower, 107 P.V. de la Costa St., Salcedo Village, Makati. "No artist has a series of works which attempt to represent the subject of globalization through feminist elements, bringing the issues into a mestiza sphere. Call 7259101, 8908-8019406.

"BOY TOY of the Wall"

More at BlanLine

Jason Mora presents "Debut" at the BlanLine Gallery of Boulevard Makati. The exhibit features over 40 works on canvas and paper. The show runs until June 7. Call 8902-8894/935.

Cebu artists at ArtistSpace

Four Cebuano artists present "Images," June 3-14 at ArtistSpace (2/F, Glass Wing, Ayala Museum, Greenbelt Park, Makati Ave. and De la Rosa St., Makati City). The exhibit features the group's artists-to-be: social realism in Philippine context. Call 8917-1030/811.

Bacolor at West

Fotie Garcino presents "The Sound of Aesthetics," until June 11 at Blend Gallery (Gallery 3, West Avenue, QC, tel. 3721119/3721-192). Bacolor fell it was a welcome coincidence that the West mount a printing press. Regularly collecting scraps for his found objects installations, he saw that a printing press was also a goldmine for ideas. He collected everything from paper used for cleaning to paper wrappers and boxes used as packaging for the plates and negatives. Bacolor was intrigued by the ink impressions of the letters which stood out in stone for his works.

"BAHAY... Found Objects Variable and Other Stars"

VISUAL ARTS

"A GLIMPSE at the Seaside," by Orbay Yuson

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Unlikely saints in 'Sacred'

INTERTWINING THEIRS[illegible] and the secular, Dante Perez depicts unlikely saints in "Sacred," his newest series of paintings.

If he lands the angels liked in "Lost Angeles," this time he discusses the progeny of the underground and exalts them as hellmarvlous.

To experience Perez' new series is to slalom through the underbelly of the city, to partake with its chemist shindlers, and to know no difference between the saints and the dregs of society.

Perez has always been affected by the dichotomy of humanity's purity and sales, and expresses the need to transcend such labels.

In "Sacred," he has amplified his faculty of reflecting eternity and sanctity by giving away and abstracting a halo-ed, compassionate face. Besides the halo, indications of divinity include enigmatic glares and backgrounds that dissolve into emanations.

Stark and uncompromising, Perez' saints become less screaming as they remove distance from the viewer with a sympathetic gesture or a tender gaze.

Above is running at 1/16' Gallery 2/L, Shops at Serendra, Bonifacio Global City Taguig. Call 9513332.

"THE BUTCHER," by Dante Perez

"KAWPhobosday," by Dante Perez

Sound art showcase

NEW MEDIA ARTS MANILA (NMAM) presented the first installment of a new series of performances, "Mixus Tot Decibels," on April 30 to a hushed audience of sonic enthusiasts sprawled on the floor of the screening room of Mogwai at Cubao X.

As its name implies, Mixus Tot Decibels was conceived as a platform for presenting sound art specifically composed for low-volume levels.

The show featured new and original sonic works by Caliph8, Tad Ermitaño, Jing Garcia (a.k.a. sonicvoyeur), Mabek Lopez, Nas Badar and Yogui, accompanied by video compositions by Mizna Bores, Lyle Bacolo and Jason Tin.

NMAM performances are supported by Globe, Inset and Sony Ericsson.

SOUND and video artist Tad Ermitaño performs with New Media Arts Manila at Mogwai's screening room, a night of minorism decibels.

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LIFESTYLE

Seasons of *Powerdance*

Dancer-choreographer Douglas Nierras and photographer Jun de Leon collaborate on a new book

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By Marge C. Enriquez
Contributor
Photos by Jun de Leon

THE TRANSIT OF THE SEASONS over the years presents a comfortable cycle and a meaningful basis for us to contemplate on the spirit, to realize sense of its reality, and to live by its authenticity.

This is the theme of the collaboration between Douglas Nierras of Powerdance and photographer Jun de Leon. Through metaphors of the seasons, the dance images trace the company's current in a society obsess to the arts.

De Leon's photographs will serve as chapter breakers for the forthcoming book "Douglas Nierras' Powerdance on TAL" which tells the story of the company since its inception in 1987.

Without any bound of seasons, a foundation or a opportunities to look it up to the past 21 years, it has become the foremost modern dance company in the country.

The images show the dancers in various levels starting from the ground, standing, traveling across space and in flight. Weightless in space is gracefully realized on the ground, the naked bodies (photographs were taped) muster and dance interesting shapes.

"We needed to show progression and fulfillment. This is what it's all about," says Nierras. "The nature's cycle emotional leads/ladders to a company's timetable which consciously express itself."

Seeds of life

The company's cycle begins with autumn, the season to pick the fruits of experiences, to take stock of the difficult times and to scatter the seeds of new life.

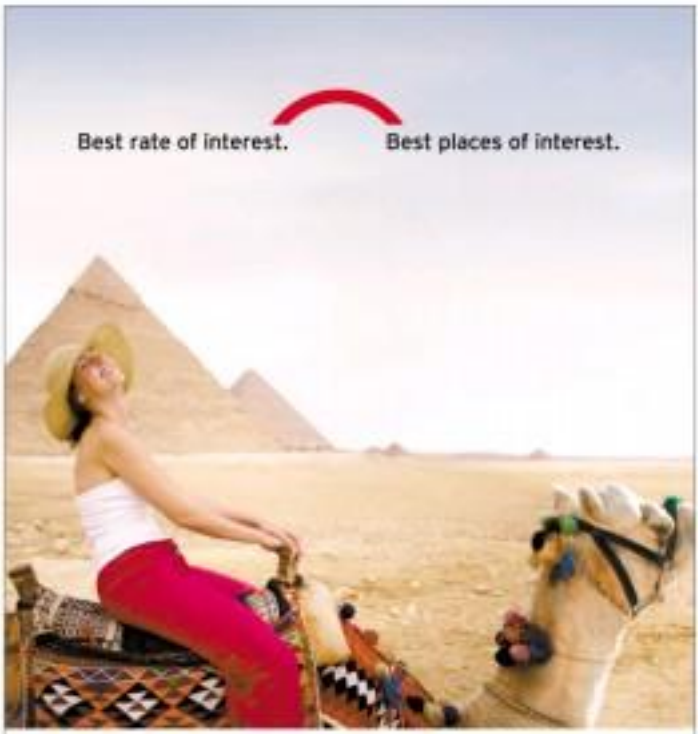
The photographs metaphorically depicts the dancers as a cupped of fallen leaves on the ground, interspersed with brown and foliage. Perched on a 12-foot scaffolding, Dr. Leon shot the dancers at eye level over perspective. Nierras says the imagery is symbolic of a company in its early stages trying to get off the ground.

Winter represents the time when illusions and emotions are stripped away, exposing realities.

"This is a crying period where conditions are tough for a company to survive," says Nierras. The smiling snowflake symbolizes the ephemeral quality of life, or how everything is just temporary including obstacles and failures.

In this photo, Cherrie Lopez, one of the dance world's rising young stars, balances on one leg and reaches out for eternity under a cascade of green feathers, evocative of nature.

Spring is the season for awakening, the time when leaves and buds show the promise of natural beauty about to unfold. This imagery is interpreted by a swirl of green fabric with gold satin, cascading the dancer and revealing only a leg.



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CAST of Avenue Q

'Avenue Q' returns one last time

FOR THOSE WHO STILL haven't seen it and those who want to see it again, Atlantis Productions brings "Avenue Q" back to Manila one final time.

"Avenue Q" is the smash-hit Broadway musical about real life in New York City as told by a cast of people and puppets through a hilariously irreverent, "Sesame Street"-meets-adult book and score. Returning to the show are original cast members Ada Siguenza, Franchie Ira, Stile Flavier, Pipbuddy Bentley, Tristan Chan and Joel Trinidad. Carlo Guevara Lubchenko joins the cast as the show's new host and Kate Monster, and Lucy the Slut.

Directed by Bobby Garcia and Chari Arespacochaga, Atlantis Productions' staging of "Avenue Q" played two sold-out runs in Manila last year and still runs in Singapore in late October at the Esplanade Theater, produced by The Barpapers Repertory Theater.

"Avenue Q" has set and costume design by Mio Infante, lighting design by Ivy Arnedo, musical direction by Joseph Cerbo and choreography by Shaddhai Angeles. Due to adult situations, like full puppet nudity, parental discretion is advised.

"Avenue Q" The Encore! Run runs June 13–22 at the Carlos P. Romulo Auditorium, SCBC Plaza, Makati City. Call 8919999, 8927978 or 0481187.

Seasons of Powerdance

From page D1

"This is the season that Joe needs to offer as long as we all need him," says Ilarina.

The cycle ends on a buoyant note, however, when life is at its peak of its fruitfulness. Covered in green leaf dresses, the dancers interlock their bodies and spin as they maintain suspend in space.

"It is the time for reaping the rewards and getting respect and recognition for what they once sowed in. The challenge is to maintain, nurture the status," says Ilarina. Hence another cycle spins.

True to his craft

For De Leon, dance is one of his most challenging subjects although it is not hard to acquire a love.

He has been shooting since the early '80s with Sassa Vibiesca, of, who was then joined for bulk of the time by Gamboa. He has also photographed Lisa Macuja and Ballet Manila's soloists, as well as dancers from Ballet Philippines.

Five years ago, he first partnered with Powerdance in a play. The October shooting here during finishes against the sun, sea and sands, and in graphic shapes, featuring colorful knits by Lulu Tan-Gan.

In an era when young Turks dominate the field with images filled with digital trickery, De Leon credits to reality his dance images assume bold, like gifts of timing, nailing the exact angle, lighting and balance in composition. Love hone fine-tuned in his 30 years career.

"I have never well-prepared for a shoot. He gets excited when ideas are being churned out and gets down to do their details. Although he says he's doing this about for himself, he selected, edges the dress of dance and the Dance Center who happens," as marks art theatre Antonio Solo Inistes.

To Ilarina, this picture is one of the highlights in the making of "Powerdance on Tour." He is the collecting memories and memorabilia from previous dancers and dance-class alumni about their peak experiences with Powerdance and what the company meant to them.

DE LEON'S photograph will serve as Ilarina's invitation for Dwight Martin's "Powerdance on Tour"

SASSA

Important moments

In his own journey, Ilarina says was important moments in Powerdance. First, he became the only Filipino choreographer to win the grand prize for "Memories," an allegory of earth's life on earth, in an international dance competition in Japan in 1999.

"It was more about what it meant to the Filipinos than to me. I hoped I did the country proud," he says.

Although the competitors from other nations were technically stronger, the Filipinos compensated with their artistry and soul, making the hearts of the audience.

"The dancers played a significant part in the growth of the company. There is a need to express Filipino talent and to appreciate their dedication to hard work," says the choreographer.

Society is now on a second wind with the annual tour of "Pandanggo," a classic piece compositional signatures on the life of Ilarina and the late of Soriano.

"In the early dance as pioneer concert in the whole world, 'Pandanggo' now to reinvigorate the spirit and reorient the minds of the audience that dance is an art as opposed to what they see in the networks."

Its luminous posture, broad Gods, a former prominence and character roles, encouraged Ilarina to use "Pandanggo" not only to spread the message of faith but also to build a wider audience base for dance.

On May 27, Ilarina is staging "Dreamers" at the Greenhills "Theff" at the Annenta Gridenos.

"After two decades of the company's existence, we are offering a free concert that will benefit many. It's been laborious and crushing on my part to solicit help from financiers. They are who best because we have no commercial visibility. They don't see the value of the arts. Unless we get support, we will never reach that stage. It's a rhythm, and rapp called us. I hope that after we are no more forever, somebody would look our way and open the doors."

Is anybody listening?

Season auditions, workshop showcase at Gantimpala Theater

GANTIMPALA THEATER, ONE of the leading community arts companies in the country today, invites the public to two very special engagements. "Blue Jeans," the musical production of the Acting in Musical Theater by Tesda, Young Adults Batch 2008, and "Summer Jam," an addition in time with the company's 21st season.

"Blue Jeans" is a musical play that features some of the most popular tunes of the '50s to performed by this year's summer workshop participants. Rondee Canaring directs, with musical direction by Emil Farias.

The performance is on May 24, 7 p.m., at the Open Air Auditorium of the Quezon Memorial Circle, Manila.

On May 25, 2:30 p.m., Gantimpala Theater signals the start of its 21st season with a one-day-only audition to be held at the Open Air Auditorium Building. The audition is open to all professional and non-professional actors, kids and female ages 18-18, with photocopy presentation.

Bring a short profile and two photographs—close up and whole body.

Callbacks will produce 11 plays during the 2008-2009 season; the four choices—"Voyage to Laura," "Rich Ole Tiu-

LAMPG Lang

Savoring Bocelli and a book of poems on Bora

By Pablo A. Tariman
Chief Critic

'Romanza' is the perfect book to bring as you reflect on life and art under the hot summer sun of a fabled island

A WEEK BEFORE the Silver Chanoff's broadcast of "Silver: Andrea Bocelli Live in Tuscany," I found myself invited in Boracay to get to know more what the entertainment chanoff had to offer apart from the sensational Italian lilted tenor doing a duet with assumed divas headed by Sarah Brightman.

The news of the Bocelli concert was a big curiosity for me as it featured the guest appearance of Chinese pianist Lang Lang, who was soloist in Rach 2 with the New York Philharmonic in Gethsada a few years back.

Grand entrance

I didn't know there was such a piece for tenor, piano and chandeliers on heaven until I heard the piano "In G Sarah" with music and lyrics by Walter Afanasieff, Eugenio Filanski, David Foster and—Andrea Bocelli!

The opening part was a grand entrance of the piano soloist and an equally grand orchestral accompaniment reminiscent of the Ravel concerto. Then Bocelli came in, with the pianist and orchestra blending with the singer like a "classicalized" pop song enhanced by classical instrumentation.

But after his appearance with the tenor, Lang Lang was given a number equal to his talent with Bocelli's "Romanza/Ebbene Ma Ben Sarebbe" Sheep Mona. By Ben Sarebbe is the number of a Bocelli concert, Lang Lang was given a dazzling ovation by the predominantly Italian crowd.

Apart from the first encounter, Silver and Cinema One Channel head Ronald Arguelles said, "Of course, we have the Cuevas and Tony awards and not Silver like Wishbone Ashley. One target market is really women from 18 to 55 and, of course, the men of their lives."

Arguelles is the same person behind Cinema One which gave viewers a rare treat of Bocelli's classic "Incendiary by Signor Rolling" last week.

"We'd be surprised to know we have a good audience in Cinema One cuz next to HBO for us Silver Channel, we would like to be known as a fun channel for viewers who know what they want and are deeply aware of the world," he said.

And so on this Boracay trip, we had the chance to see the channel's market profile and what the cable network strives to project. This is the same market that enjoys both Bocelli, Lang Lang and "Good Morning America."

Special theater

What was beautiful about the Bocelli-Lang Lang broadcast was the location, the tenor's home village called Lajatico in Tuscany where a special theater was constructed just for that concert. The venue was called Teatro del Silenzio (Theater of Silence) as indeed it was a quiet place for the concert.

After the Silver Chanoff's "In Tres, Six Entry" itinerary party, I returned to a beach café called Asia with the new book "Romanza" by Ito Abes and Marivic Rubio. With the sound of waves in the background, I read about poems in English and Filipino. I thought about how perfectly the book blended with the environment, as I reflected on Bocelli and Lang Lang and their Tuscan extravaganza.

I went over Rubio's painting, "Tuscan Dream 1," in the book, as accompanied by a Ito Abes poem:

Highlighting my dreams
Enhancing my beauty
Suggestive as ever
Any passing my fantasy

Translated by Marie Idanza Sinco:

As the moon soars
The mountain roams
The pillow is carved
By its memory of time.

Rubio said she actually was listening to Puccini and Bocelli. It when she was painting her Tuscan series.

"Romanza," which features selected poems in the bilingual Filipino-Bicolnon each as tanaga, dyorta and dalit, is both a lyrical and visual treat, with superb translations by Ed. Perez.

"Romanza" is the perfect book to bring as you reflect on life and art under the hot summer sun of a fabled island.

For inquiries on the "Silver: Andrea Bocelli Live in Tuscany" DVD, call 8936-0194/276.

Licad praised in Germany

A German music critic called Guido Lichtenfeld "dazzling" in his first performance last week of Grieg's Concerto in F with the Oldenburg State Orchestra in Germany under the baton of Dutch conductor Gerard Oskamp.

Pavle Perisic Martinec "An American pianist, a Dutch guest conductor, a Filipino pianist—no wonder can be more international than this season's 7th Symphonic Concert in the Lisjo Manor. The concert encompassed the length of the program was more than compensated by the outstanding artistic quality of the performance.

"Copland's Appalachian Spring' suite is a pleasure: work, bubbling with charm, with its pentatonic, chromatic, and folklorestic touches, many elements derived from dance, and sparkling melodies in this version [sic] short speeches. It was presented well by conductor and orchestra, and great care was taken in playing with pointed intonation, rhythmic discipline, and sensitive timbre. In Grieg's Concerto in F these qualities were even further escalated by the perfect interplay of conductor, orchestra and soloist. The piano concerto, which—as a composition—is far from perfect result of a short but violent 'marriage' of less. Harmony suffers still episodic, not-to-flowed pop music, made the greatest manipulable effect under these conditions.

Pavle Perisic Martinec's performance was not without its flaws, however. Technically demanding as the piece is, the pianist's fingers were not always clear and articulated. Some passages were played too fast, resulting in a blurred effect. Perisic Martinec's interpretation was also lacking in sensitivity. The second movement, which is usually played with a lyrical, singing quality, was rendered in a rather matter-of-fact manner. The pianist's tempo was also too fast, thus the movement lacked the necessary contrast with the first and third movements.

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New Voice Company holds V-Day Manila on June 1

CHERIE GIL

TAMI HAMAD

NEW VOICE COMPANY, PRODUCERS OF the acclaimed "The Vagina Monologues" in Asia, is set to mount an unforgettable evening on June 1—with a special back-to-back performance of Eve Ensler's "The Vagina Monologues" (TVM) and V-Day's new work, "A Memory, a Monologue, a Rant and a Prayer"—at SEBC Theater at 7 p.m. This one-night event is part of the global V-Day celebrations for 2008 and will raise funds for the Filipina Comfort Women group Lila Pilipina.

TVM is Ensler's award-winning international hit play. The New Voice Company productions in the Philippines, Hong Kong, Singapore and Tokyo have been huge successes, and hundreds of actresses have performed in either a commercial run or a fundraising event since 2000.

"A Memory, a Monologue, a Rant and a Prayer—Writings to Stop Violence Against Women and Girls" is a groundbreaking collection of monologues by world-renowned authors and playwrights, edited by Ensler and Mollie Doyle and commissioned by V-Day for the 'Say' V-Day: Until the Violence Stops festival, which took place June 2006 in New York City. All proceeds from the book benefit V-Day.

Some diverse voices of men and women rise up in a collective roar to break open, expose and examine the fearlessness of violence in all levels: brutality, neglect, a punch, even a put-down.

The volume features such authors and icons as Edward Albee on the "perfect marriage"; Dave Eggers on a fundraiser abduction; Carol Gilligan on a daughter witnessing her mother being hit; Susan Miller on raising a son as a single mother; Howard Zinn on memories of his father; Mark Matousek on growing up with women and learning to love and care for them; Boyle on her "first kiss"; Nicholas Kristof on being a male journalist and witnessing sexual slavery in Cambodia, and many more.

These writings are inspired, funny, angry, heartfelt, tragic and beautiful. Above all, together, they represent a new and profound period of how violence against women affects every one of us. TVM and "A Memory, a Monologue, a Rant and a Prayer" are a call to the world to demand an end to violence against women.

V-Day is a global movement to end violence against women and girls, that raises funds and awareness through benefit productions of TVM. 2008 marks V-Day's 10th anniversary.

Fresh from his recent successful performance at V-Day's 10th anniversary celebrations in New Orleans, where he shared the stage with international stars, New Voice Company artistic director Monique Wilson headlines the cast for this special one-night theatrical event.

Joining her are original TVM cast members Tami Mottad and Dulce Schmeiske, and regular TVM and V-Day artists Cherie Gil, Lizzi Sherman, Lily Cho, Fleeca Bernardo and Mayi Nicolas.

Joining V-Day for the first time are theater veterans Jet Vivas and Jean Henares.

The event also features the voices and talents of Philippine theater's leading men—Jamie Wilson, Bart Guingona and Michael Williams...and will also feature the young, talented members of New Voice Company.

The show is produced by NVC executive producer Shamira Ahsreya, with direction by Rise Italia-ural Monique Wilson.

For tickets and more information, call the New Voice Company at 8986005, 8985407 or 8999830, e-mail nvc@pldtdsl.net; visit www.newvoicecompany.com and www.newvoicecompany.multiply.com.

LYNN Sherman

Living the light, stylish life

You're young, you're fab and you're always on the go. Every morning, you find yourself looking really good and feeling immensely positive, what with the day's infinite possibilities all untapped. Throughout the day you smugly wish there was something refreshing to look forward to and enjoy, something that could help you get loose from life's colossal pressures. You need a refreshment that will make you feel 100% light.

Thankfully there is Coke Light, the world-renowned beverage that offers the perfect diversion for living stylishly, confidently and light. It inspires everyone to forget, even for just a while, all their worries by immersing themselves in 10 distinctive light taste with no-calories.

This year, Coca-Cola teams up with one of Hollywood's brightest stars, Sarah Jessica Parker. Parker is a young people all over the world through her appearances in several popular movies and TV shows. Sarah Jessica Parker is admired for her stylish way of living.

The newest television ad of Coke Light featuring the actress aired on May 11th. The TV ad starts off with Sarah Jessica Parker walking fashionably down New York street. She is then seen walk with her small dog on a leash and a bottle of Coke Light on hand.

When she drinks Coke Light, she immediately experiences a feeling of pleasure and floats as if by magic, moving slowly and elegantly. The camera as she enjoys the delightful feeling of floating and stars in the end "Feel 100% Light, No Calories Coca-Cola Light."

Fun and [illegible] is a good [illegible] ugh [illegible] ords, [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

Charisse Baldoria's economy of sound

By Allan Pastrana
Contributor

THE RECENT CONCERT OF CHARISSE Baldoria at the RCO Francisco Santiago Hall was generally satisfactory. It was difficult, though, to pin it down and be more specific about what made it work or otherwise.

It would be a matter of taste and not whether she did good or bad, for it was obvious she's much too intelligent to be unreliable at this point in her career. At a technical level, she may be one of the most qualified pianists around.

Her interpretation of some of the works that particular evening might have lacked something or other that is way beyond technique. Or, it could have been simply a difference of perspective that is ultimately grounded in choice.

Of course, she knew what the choices were. I can only surmise that she was probably aiming for a cosmopolitan sound. The outsider-side focus on economy works well in certain pieces. But, generally speaking, there is no definitive criterion for such a sound.

If some critics consider Beethoven to be cosmopolitan, there is enough connection to pieces he might be more than just that. The kind of almost Socratic self-criticism he projected in his performances and recordings was more noticeable than any dubious notion about a pianist's concept of sound. Baldoria was faced with something as basic as that—how to make a preference for economy her own.

The E Major Haydn Sonata was rendered with a sophistication that could be easily mistaken for safe playing. Baldoria's running notes, phrasing, articulation and whatnot were all in place, not to mention a good deal of virtuosity (in Handel's accustomed memorability) which eventually would have to refer to the musician's responsibility to the music, and hardly to herself.

Restatement

There were a couple of things I might have preferred. For one, she has the tendency to abandon the idea of contrast to those past forms, or any piece where a return or restatement is expected.

I remember a friend who told me about Rosalyn's London master class on the Beethoven sonatas, where the brilliant pianist quipped about the existing difference between playing the statement and the restatement as the first ontological divide between the present and its transformation—a memory of it.

That I didn't hear the return of the Mozartes, for example, as a kind of reasoning in her rendition of the Haydn, makes it quite difficult to carry her straightforward rendition a step further. What got lost is the possibility of an event (the statement) to hold within itself a viable past.

Baldoria's Mozart was even harder to assess. For the most part, you'd appreciate her decision not to rush the pieces with an inherent concept of time because, quite frankly, it has already become passé to think you can afford not to sweat when playing the Impressionists. Saved but an overt move clear out plan for his rhythms and use of meter (being a classicist and all) compared to Debussy.

The problem was evident in her gravitation toward a type of playing that was matter-of-fact, and ending there, without complements. But one thing a musician cannot possibly compromise in an impressionistic work is "the awareness of mimicism."

The art critic James Fraher, in his book on Manet, recounted the dissociation of the monocular model of vision during the 19th century in favor of binocularity. Baldoria missed the dynamic quality of aural images at play in Ravel's "Miroirs"—not absolute visual representations but "competent approximations."

Limited range

Her performance of Scriabin's G Sharp Minor Sonata was exciting enough even with her limited dynamic range. The Presto movement (which is more or less one of those unsettling final movements like the Precipitato in Prokofiev's 7th Sonata or Ginastera's "Rondo ad Deum") was rendered with a rhythmic vitality and pacing that was well-spaced, making the buildup a gratifying experience.

Baldoria's Op. 116 was reminiscent of those pianists who believed that Brahms was supposed to be played as deeply as possible, in stark contrast to his rich, orchestral piano writing. This was ultimately be an acquired taste for most people.

Personally I believe she made a rather interesting deviation from what most pianists, at least local ones, have done with Brahms. I may not prefer that approach, but her decisions (not only in these pieces but the others before them) were valid and not reckless thoughtful considerations from an intelligent pianist like herself.

At least, she doesn't make her renditions falsely interesting through exaggerated means. In the first place, she need not to.

Cancer survivor-turned-artist at Arte Pintura

TIMED WITH THE PHILIPPINE SUMMER or the season of fiestas, the art exhibit "Fiesta!," by debuting artist Irma T. Abo, recently opened at Arte Pintura Gallery on Shaw Boulevard, Mich Wick, Mandaluyong City.

A seasoned traveler and cancer survivor, Abo has lived in Japan and the United States. She has pursued her interests in sports, mountaineering (she has scaled Mt. Kinabalu and Mt. Apo), and rowing. She has also joined Toastmasters International.

Her paintings reflect the vibrant spirit of the festivals she has witnessed in the course of her travels in Southeast Asia. She has taken part in festivals, from Bacolod's Masskara to the feast of Sto. Niño.

With wide-eyed and childlike fascination, she paints people of the cultural communities in festive garbs, from the "Dolls of Catalunan to Indonesian women in their colorful batik.

She describes her work as a celebration of life after her rebirth from cancer.

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LIFESTYLE

ST. AUGUSTINE Cathedral. The cross, planted in 1888, is the only Spanish-heritage symbol that remains.

The National Heritage Festival opens in Mindanao's Golden City

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KITCHIE NADAL

Cagayan de Oro as heritage showcase

Text and photos by Doctor R. Mislis
Contributor

THE LARGE NUMBER OF CAgayanons who came to the Limketkai Mall to watch the performances of the "Darangen sa Barangay" epic by the Kagay-an Performing Arts (KPA) proved to be a relief. While Cagayan de Oro is a mecca for white-water rafting enthusiasts, its people keep their cultural heritage—like the river rapids the city has been known for—raging in their hearts.

Cagayan de Oro's value for its heritage was reiterated by a media group flown in from Manila and Cebu by Air Philippines during the opening festivities of National Heritage Month. The opening was described in "one of the best openings we've ever had" by gallery owner Araceli Dulay, Boasters of Sinot of the Filipino Heritage Festival.

The "Darangen" is the pre-Islamic Mindanao epic declared by the Unesco as among the World's Masterpieces of Oral Heritage. Written in Maranao, it is actually sung in traditional practice for almost 24 hours for seven days.

KPA showed an impressionistic concept of one of the best-known ones told, the "Kawaing," or the wedding of Bantugan and Princess Bai Lamoosen.

The persistent suitor Bantugan, with the help of the sorceress Bonanova, abducts the princess before the wedding and keeps her in the heart of the

CAGAYAN DE

STAINED-GLASS windows of St. Augustine Cathedral

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PAINTING of old Cagayan at Xavier University Museum

BANIG weaver and doer of the Cagayan de Oro river from outside the Macahambus caves

Cagayan de Oro as heritage showcase

BAMBANIHONG murals at Museum of Town Cultures

Soriat. But Bai Lourenes is able to free herself with the help of the three Yemaya or the Good Spirits.

IDA narrative director Glen Reyes, who chairs the local festivities, said the presentation might not be as traditional as how the Manobos would do it, but it was as authentic as the original since "authenticity is not the keeping of the form but the reinterpretation of the essence and aesthetic of the form in contemporary context."

Before the performance, Bukidnong Hagyanay, a group of teenagers from Bukidnon, warmed up the crowd by engaging in a bakgisaan. With Crispin de Leon as artistic director, Ricardo Llaneres, Rachel Tamayo and Jocelyn Bagalso elicited laughter from the audience with their witty poetic jours as they argued whether it was less to use the cubs or the toilet paper when nature called.

Friendship city

Over at SM Cagayan, Mayor Constantino Jaraula welcomed guests in the "City of Golden Friendship." He said CDO had been blessed by the bounteous fire spared from typhoons and earthquakes and being chosen as a venue for the opening of National Heritage Month.

A traditional arm-and-curfew demonstration at the mall's atrium featured bluesman and Hagonoy resident Jerry Dacalanio strumming groovy and backbeat.

"Cagayan has a distinct heritage in that it has been refined by age," Jaraula said. "It has gone through the process and come out with the best. But the best heritage of the city is not just something physical. It is the heritage in the hearts of our people."

Cagayan de Oro was razed to the ground by its colonial masters, the Spaniards, the Americans and the Japanese, who invaded the province on May 2, 1942, and pretty much destroyed it. This is why there are very few heritage structures that remain today.

One from that has been preserved is the ruins outside the St. Augustine Cathedral. The wooden room was severed by the decades of wars in 1800. It is the only relic from the earliest Hispanic past that remains.

The church had been originally constructed of wood and nipa during the time of Fray Pedro de Santa Barbara in 1777. A year later, it was dedicated to St. Augustine. It was reconstructed in 1840, after the sacred it down four years earlier. Fray Simon Lozoia de Santa Catalina imported marble statues from China for its reconstruction.

A hundred years later, the church was destroyed by the liberating American planes. Cagayan's first bishop, Fr. James D.L. Hayes, SJ, rebuilt it in 1948, donning the interiors with lace 19th-century stained-glass windows donated by the Sacred Heart Sisters of New York.

Xavier University founder Atanacio de Cagayan, in the late forties to receive university status...in 1958. Its museum is a must for archaeologist as it keeps in the skeletons of the early to former bosses in Mindanao. Found at Hukoga Cave, the remains have been dated by the University of California as having existed around 377 AD.

Old Cagayan

A painting of old Cagayan can also be found in the museum. Assistant curator Sonny Dacin explained the importance of Plaza Divisoria. He said Big Bren used to be a problem in Cagayan, and to prevent it from spreading, the rhorgaand generals made one made in 1903.

Plaza Divisoria features one, served local and national heroes such as José Rizal, Andrés Bonifacio, Ramon Magsaysay, Manuel Dos Apellido Nilo, and Anastasio Borja, Cagayan's first elected mayor.

On weekends or nighttime, Plaza Divisoria closes its streets to traffic and turns into a café and market where locals and tourists dine while enjoying live band performances.

Another museum that opened recently is the one in Capitol University, which was founded by Laureano and Severini Benitez in 1971. The Museum of Three Cultures features artifacts and pictures gathered by Laureano from the different places he ministered and served back in 1950.

The museum has an extensive collection of artifacts from the Christian lowlands and Batanes, and Illuminati antiques from Tagaya, Lanao del Sur. It also has a gallery of Cagayan ethnohistory as well as showcases of Lumad arts and crafts from the Higaonon and Manobo cultures; archives of Spanish-era documents; and photographs and memorabilia of historic milestones personalities.

La Casilda Museum was originally the vacation house of Lourdes Tagajan University founders Rodolfo Neri-Nelson and Elias Pelaez. It became a museum in 1997, and showcases antique Chinese jars and wares from different dynasties.

Outside the city 15 kilometers south, in the Macahambus Cave. In the 1900s, the cave was used as a secret meeting place and hideout for Filipino forces battling the American invaders. It is also the site of the Battle of Macahambus 1901, where the Filipinos first were over the Americans.

A visit to Cagayan de Oro would be incomplete, especially for Macahambus Gorge, where a large spring emanates from one of the rock shelters, passing through the cave's lower portion.

E-mail the author at donsail-lr@yahoo.com

WOODCARVING depicting tales of Chinese trading ships

ARACELI Soliz, Heritage Foundation officer

New book on the Manobos

THE CAPITOL UNIVERSITY Press of Cagayan de Oro has published "Mintgas Ini, way Tigbabalasan sa Kultura," a descriptive ethnographic of the Tigwa Manobos and the Matigsalug Manobos of Bukidnon.

The Tigwa are those who traditionally inhabit the banks of Tigwa River while the Matigsalug are those who dwell along the banks of Salug River, surrounding their migration into other areas of Bukidnon.

The tribal names of these hinterland peoples are attributive of their riverine provenance. Though both tribes belong to the vast Manobo family of Bukidnon, they are distinct ethnolinguistic groups.

The book is edited by Amor de Torres, former national president of the Philippine Association for Studies Education.

Together with the Lumads, De Torres and a team of educators developed a course module for Lumad education. The aim is to enable them to write materials for their home communities to preserve their culture and by which they could appreciate their own identity.

Except for De Torres, who edited the book with English subjects, them are no academicians among the authors. All 10 belong to the Manobo Tribal Community Association.

The book describes their community situation, practices and beliefs, traditions, farming and forestry activities, dances and music, and traditional justice. That the authors have also interspersed their accounts with tribal photographs, poetry and the curriculum they themselves had developed for their Lumad education program.

Capitol University Press is the scholarly publishing arm of Capitol University in Cagayan de Oro City. It also publishes internationally refereed journals.

Director of CU Press is Dr. Antonio Montalvan, Mindanao anthropologist and Philippine Daily Inquirer opinion writer.

Exhibit pays homage to Pinoy sense of humor

THIS MAY, THE Philippine Heritage Festival and Metropolitan Museum of Manila pay tribute to the unique Pinoy sense of humor with "Patawa," an exhibit of paintings, memorabilia, photographs, sound bytes, wall text and video projections that evoke laughter.

Opening on May 14, 6:30 p.m., and running until May 31, it will feature works by painter, sculptor and chef Claude Tayag and artist-educator Antonio Austria, among others.

Guest of honor is Fritz Ansley of the Philippines' favorite ground and veteran comedian Leo Martinez.

"The exhibit will focus on the Filipino sense of humor as a tactic that demystifies Filipino social identity through works of art and other visual materials," festival director Anna Maria Harper says.

The historian said heritage conservator adds that, regardless of social status, Filipinos are known for their many personalities.

A study released by the Department of Social Welfare and Development in 2005 found Filipinos remain stable because of two factors: very healthy sense of humor and prayer.

Among Filipinos who have made their mark in the laughter department are King of Comedy Pendol's "Dolphy" Quinto, Tito, Vic and Joey trio, and master impersonator Willie Nepomuceno.

Overseen, the Pinkdrop Dee and Bob Matsuoka are only a few of Pinoys sought after for their works.

"Patawa" forms part of the month-long National Heritage Month festivities, which, festival president Austria Bulos says, is aiming "to promote awareness for the rich heritage we have as a people."

Made possible through the auspices of the National Commission for Culture and the Arts and the Department of Tourism, the exhibit will be brought to Vigan, Pampanga, Bacolod, Iloilo, Davao and Zamboanga after the Manila run.

Call 8535885, 9263517 or 5365500. Mail info@filheritagefestival.com.

"JEEPNEY Super Deluxe Haircut," by Antonio Austria

100 Kwentong Peyups

My unique experiences of UP have rendered various emotions. My not-so-unique ones, shared with many, were extremely intense. Of course, my memories are colored by my own perspective, very self-reflective, for here I present my story. I know I have many counterparts of us in very young age.

SAD! My very first experience of UP was so sad. My "separation anxiety" from kindergarten. I'm not quite sure how my mother knew that I had learned to read by then. My older sister was taking Early Childhood Education at the College of Home Economics and she tried out various learning methods with me as her guinea pig. I still recall chuckling at the words "Ba-ba-bi-bo-bu" and reading was easy. Turns out later, my parents believed in nonsense and they truly believed in UP education. So the next year, after intensive kindergarten training at Ilocos School, I had tears. The thing I had succeeded quite well in then was to cry because I was being sent to school. I ended up studying how to give those tears when I pursued Psychology courses and this became part of my clinical gift.

SCARY! A definitely unique UP experience of mine happened in the early 70's. I must have been around 11 years old and I would walk from school during the height of protests against the Marcos dictatorship. Back then, my brother loved to collect unused things and would pick up those pamphlets among the trash. They turned out to be home-made bombs called "Molotov Cocktails". It was a miracle we didn't blow off our limbs or worse, kill any of us young and totally oblivious to the dangers during those times.

FRUSTRATING! I tried all five experimenting and first-hand were teaching helped create a decisive, learning experience for me. Most experimentation would come my way later on when I was taking Psychology of UP in my 3rd year. I remember we were one of the first if not the first class to be "rationalizing" the college course curricula. We had no textbooks in Filipino so non-Tagalog students (though we were basically translating English research articles to Filipino). I recall people complaining, saying everything was suddenly so hard to read after we translated or created new words like abstraksyon (concept), hipotesis (hypothesis), manuskrito (manuscript), and neurosikolohiya (neuropsychology). We would also have to research and write papers in Filipino. Some words like subsequent (chain), rather than more popular filipino translations like siyu-siyu, it was made to linger on paper, we used the formal phrase mumunahin (which means a process of going ahead). The exercise hit me hard, but we did persevere and I learned to be innovative.

EXCITING! The common UP experience I remember was having a lot of "clubs" – and no, I'm not talking about nightclubs. Although we had to study hard to live up to the saying "Iskolar ng Bayan", there were still a lot of activities happening outside the classroom, which continually challenged us beyond academics. We had the art club, the book club, the activist organizations, the choir, sports, the theatre productions – there were UP in almost every school in college there were social, religious groups, academic clubs, scholar groups, fraternities, sororities, and cultural groups. And of course, there were the school rules, fundraising activities, concerts, protest marches, parades, and so much more. I was involved in practically all of the clubs around me and I was proud to be a part of the UP community.

Although our distinctive way of living, even self-serving as those fun, great new friends across our college lives we were all glad to be part of the active Philippine society, despite being oppressed under martial law. Our activism was channeled through many of our classes in which subtly protesting through written works, performances, in productions, and exchanges with professors and students. We helped in the fight for peace and freedom in the Philippines in the world. My family claimed leaving the Philippines to seek better opportunities, whatever you call it, I still consider myself a child of the Philippines. I continue to have the yearning to serve my country and soon, my friends and family think of it as a sign of courage – it is indeed so when I decide to do well in the first time around.

Alice Sicat • 77-03240
UP Elementary School, 4 B.S. Psychology

Paid tuityan sa UP

'Astig' book now out

Milflores Publishing, Inc. has released "Isang Napakalaking Kasalanan," a collection of funny, wildly imaginative, and insightful essays in Filipino by Vlad Bautista Gonzales.

Most of the essays were originally written for the author's blogspot on the Net. They cover a wide variety of forms and subjects—from his favourite friend, Mhike, who performs naked in public and haggles 15 bankerohalic, neurotic bulls and vulligerals while holding her supposite baton, to his hilarious adventures while training as he a snake collector in college, to a script for a TV reality show featuring his sexy bobcats.

There are also absurd dialogues between the author's kids and other close relatives, and hilarious jar-cracking scenes featuring his parents and siblings.

Vlad is a master, at a remarkably young age, of the literary art of making the familiar fresh and interesting and the impossible familiar and accessible.

Some senior writers think Vlad is the voice of a whole new generation by virtue of his inventive use of street Taglish and other literary skills.

The author teaches Multilevel Popular Feminism at Enlivening Popular at University of the Philippines Diliman and has taught at the Kapisanan Pilipino at Ateneo University in Katipunan.

He says he likes making his readers laugh...and even educate his students, his readers though, anyway.

He spends a lot of his time watching current old local TV movies and telenovelas, and reading comics. If he were one of the characters in the anime "Naruto," he says he would be a tiny Shikamaru or a comedy Gaara.

The in-your-face cover of the book was designed by Arnold Ramos and the layout was done by Jennifer Dadao.

"Isang Napakalaking Kasalanan" is available in all National Book Stores, Power Books, Books for Less and other major book stores at P195.00 each copy.

Call 7230450, e-mail milflores@pldtdsl.net or visit http://milflores-inc.blogspot.com.

FROM E-BOOK TO PAPERBACK

"The Only Thing Between Us" marks Pamela Santos' debut as a fiction writer. Originally an online story uploaded in a forum about love friends, it caught Sienna Ramos and Ryan, "The Only Thing Between Us" drew readers, evolved into an e-book and is now a paperback. Published by Great Books Publishing, it was recently launched in Midland Book Store (MBS) at SM Megamall. Available at MBS. Visit www.pamelasantos.com.

PAMELA Santos

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LEARNING

The ace up Payatas' sleeve

Four public schools rise from the dumps, thanks to Ateneo's sustained support

PRINCIPAL Benjamin Culing, shown with students of Payatas C, embraced the dead spirit and declared that, from now on, second to the last, Lupang Pangako Elementary School would be on the top 20 of the Quezon City division. JASON ESCALONA

By Linda B. Bohilo

BY MOST ACCOUNTS, PEOPLE LIVing in Payatas, including the children, felt like discards, much like the garbage that was dumped there.

Hiding out a living from other people's trash, they had low self-esteem, little hope and few aspirations. Though they entertained big dreams, the dreams were more like escapes from the reality of life amid poverty and squalor.

The residents were weary of the gunshots, people who came bearing gifts that vanished only to temporary relief and left them stuck in the same pit. They were "saturated with help," as Anne Lan S. Candelaria, a political science professor and the first head of the Ateneo Center for Educational Development (Aced), put it. But the assistance had little lasting impact.

Other people who came to visit turned them into laboratory rats, unveiled for school papers and some major research.

So, the residents often just tried to get the most out of such encounters. "Magkano ka sa costs?" was the standard question asked of people who came purposefully to help.

Aced had to work cut out for it when it came to Payatas in 2001 to create a framework for the improvement of basic education in the Philippines. The framework was low-cost though relatively labor-intensive, requiring as it did not just the

THE ACE 11

Test-Based review for

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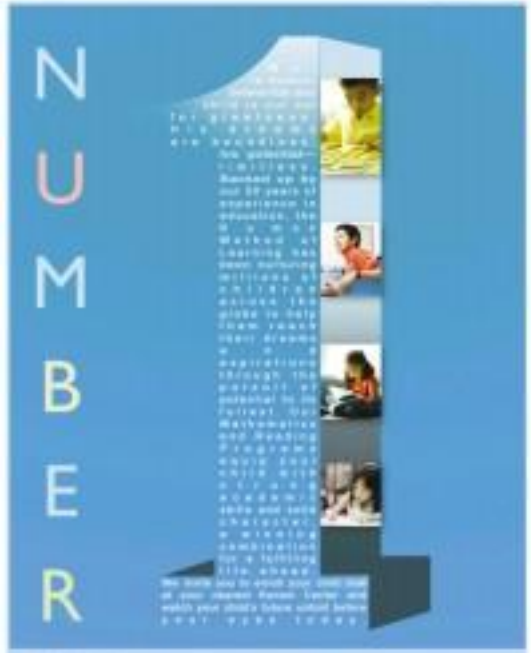

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Playgrounds for the MIND

JUBILEE SCULPTURE
To mark its 75th founding anniversary, Adamson University commissioned last year award-winning sculptor Priscillano "Jun" Picadio Jr. to create a four-figure bronze sculpture that would show the university's Greek and Vincentian heritage, as well as its hundreds of thankingsary to future generations. The work, unveiled on Feb. 7 last year, has become a favorite backdrop for photo sessions among members of the Adamson community. It shows St. Vincent de Paul, the school's patron saint and founder of the Congregation of the Mission or the Vincentians, talking to a male college student and an elementary-school girl. Standing behind the college student is Dr. Brother Lucas Adamson, who founded the university in 1932. The jubilee sculpture is a donation of Chicago-based twin alumni Manny and Marc Agulo, an investigative lawyer and a CPA, respectively. The project was undertaken by Artesia, Inc.

Ateneo law school's apprenticeship partner

THE ATENEO DE MANILA University School of Law has officially accredited Bongcos Regis Uniplan Intellectual Property Attorneys (BRU) as a partner in the implementation of its apprenticeship program. BRU is a law firm that deals exclusively with intellectual property law. With the accreditation, BRU will train and expose apprentices from Ateneo in all aspects of local and international practice of intellectual property law and information technology. Interested students may send their application to bru@bplaw.ph.

Pact on marketing education cooperation

INTERNATIONAL ACADEMY of Management and Economics (IAME) professor Gerald S. Aburgos, Ph.D., signed the Agreement on Cooperative Educational Exchange between the Marketing Educators Association of America (MEA) and Association of Marketing Educators Association, Philippines (AME). The agreement will permit the exchange of academic information to enhance cooperation and understanding between the parties. The signing was done during the annual Marketing Educators Conference recently. Other signatories were Dr. Barbara Gross, MEA conference chair and president-elect; Dr. Brian Jorgensen, MEA president; and Prof. Charo Yturralde, AME president. Aburgos presented his paper, "Marketing Rescue: Strategies that Worked for Budding Entrepreneurs," focusing on IAME's academic threats of helping the country's entrepreneurs.

LITERACY SEMINAR
Education Undersecretary Ramon Bacani gave an inspirational message during the recent National Seminar for Literacy Workers of the Philippine Normal University. Supported by the Literacy Coordinating Council, the conference had for its theme: "Strengthening Mass-school-based Literacy Programs". University president Lungarda Bartho welcomed participants. Professor Lorelino Vergara, head, culture and the arts office, facilitated the afternoon session. Participants included Dr. Carol Guerrero, Dr. Hilda Bataria, Dr. Aguirin and Dr. Angelina Romero.

Arellano faculty attends in-flight catering seminar

DIANA CHRISTE ALGAR and the faculty of the Arellano University School of Hotel, Restaurant and Institution Management, together with fourteen Lorma Colleges and Jubilee Manufor, attended the first in-flight catering seminar conducted recently at the Mactan-Cebu Catering Services (MACS), the first fully functional in-flight catering facility inside the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (Naia) in Pasay City. Organized in cooperation with the Association of Administrators in Hospitality, Hotel and Restaurant Management Educational Institutions (AAHPARE), MACS orientated seminar participants to current trends in in-flight service. Discussions revolved around the theme, "A Closer Look at In-Flight Catering Operations." Participants were taken on a tour of MACS facilities. Arellano said she planned to integrate a similar seminar and tour in the HRM course this coming school year.

CEU alumna is Region 3 outstanding student

KAYE with Bella Cruz Rocas, Region core leads graduate and gold medalist for leadership of the Centro Escolar University Mabini-Schoolof Public Service, is one of the Ten Outstanding Students of The Philippines, Region 3. The award honored the region's youth for academic excellence, exemplary leadership, community involvement and good moral values. It was spearheaded by the Commission on Higher Education Regional Office III in partnership with the PIM Foundation, PIM Corporation, Rotary Club of Nozaras Pampanga and National Bookstore. This year's theme was "Learning, Leading and Serving for Life." It aimed to promote understanding and commitment to build a better life anchored on good moral values and faith in God. CEU, which was established in 1967, marked its centennial last year. Log on to www.ceu.edu.ph.

Miriam trains teachers for inclusive classroom

MIRIAM COLLEGE'S Southeast Asian Institute for the Deaf (SAID) and Special Education Department will conduct a three-day seminar-workshop on "The Inclusive Classroom at Work: Centers for Learning, Thematic Curriculum, and Inclusive Lesson Plans," May 20-24, 8:00 a.m.-4 p.m. at the Fe Ashland Hall, Miriam College. The seminar is in collaboration with the Link Center for the Deaf, Dr. Susan Hooley, an internationally renowned expert in special education from Gallaudet University, Washington, D.C., will be the speaker. The seminar aims to enhance teachers' skills for a faster-paced classroom, more individualized learning, etc. Call the Miriam College Planning and Development Office at 4896400 extension 1130 or 3445-2250040 or Link Center at 4360565, 4360725, 8929-9574851.

UST holds wellness fair

THE UNIVERSITY OF SANTO TOMAS, through the Health Service Center, held a two-day Wellness Fair recently in Plaza Mayor, UST. The event was in partnership with World Philippines and in cooperation with Smart Communications, Pfizer Inc., Aran Philippines, Creative Bakers Co. Inc. Theme of the university-wide campaign was "10 Days to Wellness: Fit at 100." It was a collaboration project of the UST Health Service Group, Institute of Physical Education and Athletics, College of Rehabilitation Sciences, College of Education and the Office of Public Affairs. Aiming to promote physical fitness to the Thomasian community, it was one of the programs for UST 2011, the university's 400th foundation anniversary.

OLFU introduces new dental procedure

MINIMAL INTERVENTION DENTISTRY (MID) may be the holistic wellness and cure teeth and gums need. The new dental procedure determines a patient's plaque and acidity levels. The College of Dentistry of Our Lady of Fatima University (OLFU) is the only institution in the Philippines to offer this latest innovation in oral care and wellness. By determining the plaque and acidity level in a patient's mouth, dentists can provide more effective prescriptions for the care of teeth and gums. With MID, patients can empowered by knowing what foods to avoid and what foods are good for their teeth. They also learn proper hygiene procedures they can do at home. OLFU's College of Dentistry aims to advance the dental clinical practice in the Philippines to provide patients better quality of life. Through MID, patients, with the help of dentists, can start early teaching children about healthy diet and oral health practices.

THE PHILIPPINES' accountancy profession, represented by the Board of Accountancy (BOA) and the Philippine Institute of Certified Public Accountants (PICPA), was declared recently Public Governance Nation (PGN)-compliant by the Institute for Solidarity in Asia (ISA). Photo shows (from left) Commander Barrion, PICPA director Lucila Tarrela, BOA member Benita Cabrera, BOA member Eugene Mateo, BOA chair Andres Cabagnot, PICPA president Sonia Gatez, chair, PICPA committee on ISA; Antonina Fortuna-Ilo, University of the East chancellor and former chair, Professional Regulation Commission, and Rodrigo Roque, PICPA vice president.

Three men in kiddie school

By Bianca Cervanyi
Contributor

"LIKE PERFORMING, ANY children are always a captive audience. They're the most critical of critics. Fear the emotes to please as well. The moment you make them laugh, they're yours. That makes it easier to teach them," says Jim Mendiola, 37, when asked why he is a preschool teacher in a time when male teachers are becoming a vanishing breed.

He says he decided to teach younger students because, "In grade school, students already have mindsets and established personalities." He was a grade school teacher at the University of Santo Tomas for several years before he moved to Second Home.

"Rather than host bonds with students already set in their ways," he says, "I want to be able to mold them from day one."

Mendiola is one of three male teachers at Second Montessori preschool. The others are brothers Jesse and Miguel Bernal whose mother founded the school.

"At first, I was doing it for my mom," says 22-year-old Miguel. "But then I saw how passionate Jim was, and I realized that working in a preschool is great training for parenthood. I'm completely enjoying myself now."

Jesse agrees. "When my mom said she needed help, I was eager to give it a try. I wanted to learn how to pass on leadership qualities."

"In the Philippines, preschool education is seen as a luxury," says Mendiola. "I believe it is a necessity. Children need to be shown the right path early."

Of the three, only Mendiola has a degree in Education. Jesse took up European Studies and Miguel, International Studies.

Second home

A progressive learning center, Second Montessori Elementary Philippine Space Complex (formerly ULTRA) in Pasig City [tele.639991 65/65280020] has male and female teachers for every class so both can assist in a child's cognitive development.

"The school is the second home of the kids," Jesse says. "So we act as the male figureheads in their second home."

Parents at Second Mom like having both male and female teachers in their kids' classrooms

Mendiola says, "Sometimes, the kids call us Daddy Sometimes, they don't at a joke but I think it shows a certain level of trust."

Although it makes the coaches feel good that kids regard them with affection, they say they cower the children as

OUT on a field trip, preschool teacher Miguel keeps class watch over his sunny-eyed wards.

"What we're doing is modeling proper male behavior," says Mendiola. "Among kids, there is no sexual stereotyping yet about what boys and girls should do. We teach them what we feel are right values."

Jesse notes, "There's a Filipino concept of what men should do, but there are things that should be corrected. For instance, men can do housework and they can be affectionate without being gay."

Also, there are some things that are best told by a man to young boys.

"Boys will be boys, and we allow some rough 'play'" says Jesse. "But we always stress they should be gentle when playing with girls."

The inclusion of male teachers in preschool classrooms appeals to parents of Second Mom.

Jesse says "They appreciate that there children have a male figure to look up to."

Surprises

Despite the seriousness of their task, Mendiapaz says "the best part of being a preschool teacher is going to work everyday knowing that you will have fun. There's always an element of surprise."

"Everyone worthy just every now and, you have to be extra sensitive. It keeps you on your toes. You never every moment with the kids," Jesse says. "It's eventual yearly for us—being with kids makes you a kid again."

And there are the perks. "Christmas is the best time to be a teacher!" Jesse exclaims. "I receive 36 gifts every Christmas. I had seven guitars so many gifts in one go in my life."

On a more serious note, Miguel says, "It's the interaction with the children that's the best part. We get to create the ripple effect in their lives. When people ask us what we do for a living, we can say we make a difference in people's lives."

Jesse says people are usually surprised to learn he is a preschool teacher.

He is, after all, 6'3" and male. But he feels he has found his calling. He is now taking master's studies in education administration at the Ateneo de Manila University.

"When there's a drastic change in a child—he becomes jolly and outgoing instead of whiny and helpless—you know you had a part in that development. Some of it was your doing, and it makes you feel good," says Jesse.

E-mail the author at email@yahoo.com

REAL MEN teach preschool flowering teacher Jesse (at left and) teacher Jim, above, with their young students.

Special treat for young Pinoy

DHL AN EXPRESS AND LOGISTICS company sponsored the OK Batang Pinoy Abo educational tour for 2,218 preschool students and toddlers aged 3-6 years old.

Participants from various Imerial Ralinga (UR) Sibol Schools had a chance to explore and appreciate their rich Filipino heritage through the DHL-sponsored learning activity.

They were introduced to Filipino folklore, traditional song and dance ensembles, indigenous musical instruments, utensils and other Filipino artifacts/events at the Museo Pambata and Rizal Park.

The children were also encouraged to play traditional Filipino games like tumbang preso and patintero.

The OK Batang Pinoy Abo educational tour is one of DHL's initiatives to help educate and inspire young Filipinos through their rich heritage.

Ahmad Mohamad, DHL Express country manager, said the activity was proof of the company's commitment to support communities and countries where it operates.

He said DHL believes that youth-based educational and cultural efforts like the OK Batang Pinoy help inspire young people to learn and contribute to the cultural advancement of their country.

Popular requests from readers

IT HAS BEEN A LITTLE MORE THAN a month since Chin column moved here from the Science and Health section. Thank you, readers, for sending comments, queries and suggestions regularly. I regret that I cannot personally answer each message, but I assure you that I read every one. Every now and then, I will feature interesting mail. Let's start with some representative letters.

Book recommendations

Rina Carpio writes: I read with great interest your column on Brian Sipes (May 5). Like my darling grandnephew, I could not help but visualize my 3½ year old grandson Carlos Zeus as soon as I saw his face. In the same place Brian is seen, Carlos was described all the planets, the shapes of the comets, and the characteristics of the sun. When he talks, he says I'm "like Pluto" for small and "like Jupiter" for big. Because his keen interest has become known to friends and relatives, for his birthday and at Christmas, he receives mostly books on astronomy and he never gets tired of reading them. He can spend hours at Fully Booked or Power Books stores, his favorites. Can you recommend books on astronomy for his age?

Congratulations! Carlos evidently loves astronomy, which motivates him to learn. Space is fascinating, and children can indeed start by studying planets and celestial objects like the sun and the moon. Often, though, it is no longer officially a place, which I am sure Carlos knows.)

When he was in preschool, my son loved the Magic School Bus series, including their books on astronomy, such as "Lost in the Solar System" and "Out of this World: Space Rocks" (Both by Joanna Cole and Bruce Degen), and "Sun Storm" (by Nancy White and Ali Bahl). The DK! "Space Adventures" (by Asia Citro, Karen Brewer, Robert Dinwiddie, and Judy Lalkowicz) is also available. Check out the series' other books that feature easily discussions on terrific topics like the human body, insects and electricity.

Where Carlos is older, he can read Magic School Bus chapter books such as "Space Explorers" (by Eva Moore and Ted Enik) and "Space and the Planets" (by Kate Hindmarsh and Peter Bollinger). These should all be available in major bookstores, but I remember getting most of them second-hand at Book Sale.

Many of you readers have asked for recommendations and reviews of books, inspiring stories, and television, and I promise to discuss them in-depth soon.

Inspiring stories

Claudette dela Peña writes: I am from General Santos City and I just finished reading your column on your mom today (May 12). It is really nice!... It's wonderful to see how much you were loved by your mom. Please write some more inspiring and touching columns.

In the first two days after the column came out, I received more than 50 e-mail from readers, mostly Ozzie people I didn't personally know. That's what makes writing this column worthwhile. Thank you for your heartfelt message. I am honored that you felt moved to contact me right after reading about my mom. Yes, I will write many more real life inspiring stories.

Readers, why don't you send stories of outstanding educators, students and mentors?

EUREKA!

Queenie N. Lee-Chua

Reader contributions

Pramurai Librun writes: A graduate of UP Diliman, I am now a researcher in Mermed V. Gallego Foundation College in Calamba, Laguna City. I read your column on "Teacher Magic" (April 7). I would like to refer something also on the personal qualities that make a good teacher, to the kinds of acts encounter with a learner who has these qualities. Can I send it to you?

In this column, I have decided to focus more on the successful aspects of education rather than on the problems we face. Do send your article up, and if I feel that it can help others, I will either include it in a future article, or send it in my editor who may

and mentors!

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Citations and reprints

Lachie Isobel writes: I am the print and of Bethel International School in Pasig, Metro, Leyte. I have been asked to speak to top high school graduates in Region 8 at the Depdil Convention Hall. I chanced upon your impressive articles. May I have permission to use some personalities in your articles as examples of success stories of students with consistent and conviction and character?

Sure, it is always great to publicize dedicated educators in any forum. Teaching is sometimes a thankless profession, and we need all the goodness and cheer that we can get. Incidentally, please acknowledge the source, including the name of the column, the newspaper (or website) and the publication date.

A number of you readers have requested permission to write from or reprint entire articles. If you will cite yours really, as to the previous ones, please announce your complete source (and website if your thesis/reports/presentations and based on it, if needed).

However, if you need direct quotes for your written piece, and especially if you will reprint articles (in a website, say), please e-mail me a letter of request.

Queenie N. Lee-Chua is a professor of math and physiology at the Ateneo de Manila University. E-mail her at blue_duck@yahoo.com

FAMILY DAY at Linda Preschool Learning Palace, the school's first, was attended by students and their parents, siblings and other relatives. Besides giving out awards to students with Mom and Dad (top photo, left), there were fun games like balloon-and-spoon beat racing (left) and class performances (above) that wowed the crowd.

TURNING 'CATERPILLARS' INTO 'BUTTERFLIES'

The Caterpillar School, a pre-nursery school for children aged 2-4.5, is founded on the philosophy that each child is unique and has an enormous potential to develop his/her gifts and abilities. The school offers an integrated curriculum that provides learning activities designed to help a child achieve balanced growth. Caterpillar School is now accepting enrollees for 2008-2009. The school is at 428 Jose Abad Santos St., Urdaneta Baguio, San Juan City; tel. nos. 7252645 and 7247286. Visit www.thecaterpillarschool.multiply.com.

Picture it!

A lesson plan on news photos

EVERY NEWSPAPER RELIES ON GOOD PHOTOGRAPHS TO help inform readers about what is happening in the world around them. This study guide aims to share all students in the wide pictures in print in a newspaper like the Inquirer.

The ITE programwas designed to enhance newspaper reading appreciation, strengthen communication and language skills, and develop students into life-long readers. The lesson plans make use of the long term to teach not just current events but also reliable content by the media—in real life context. They may be adjusted to any level of learning, from the grades to really college levels.

Teachers in the would like to bring exciting and timely learning experiences into their classrooms may call the Inquirer should contact learning@inquirer.com.ph or text 09163014888 | the following subjects: Science, names of school, children of school, subjects by your teach.

Objective

Students will be able to locate photographs of people, places and events in the news, write descriptive sentences, and then turn their sentences into captions.

Materials

Copies of the facsimile copies of the Activity Sheet

Procedures

1. Show students the Inquirer front page. Ask to their attention to the main photo; examples of which to use and which to avoid are shown here.
2. Tell students that to use this day in Tuesday, a timely and provocative photograph is featured on the front page to make the Inquirer work to certify up-pending. Photos are printed on the inside pages as well to supplement the day's news.
3. Distribute copies of this in-camera and the Activity Sheet.
4. Inform the class that news photos are often taken by staff or commissioned photographers of the newspaper. Point out examples. If we were happens in another country, such as the recent earthquake in China or Burma (now in Burma (Myanmar), the photos are provided by wire services such as Agence France Presse (AFP), Associated Press (AP) and Reuters. Point out some photos in The World section. 5. Download details in the news story—answers to the who, what, when, why and how questions—and locate the captions of photos. Ask students to read the photo captions from their copies of the Inquirer.
6. Have the class complete the Activity Sheet; then students close their work with the class.

Activity Sheet

Choose any photo from the facsimile. Cut it out and paste it here.	What is happening in the photo?
	What might have happened just before it was taken?
	What is about to happen?
	What feelings are being shown?
	What might the person(s) in the photo be thinking or feeling?
	Write a caption

INQUIRER IN EDUCATION

FRONT PAGE photo of Palawenos in city Kelly Lerma

US AMBASSADOR Kristie Kenney, Petron chair and CEO Nick Aquino (2nd from right), and president Ramon Ang (right) with Helen Mangay, a beneficiary of the Petron-USAID partnership. Also in photo is principal Ronnie Bacay of Pangyan Elementary School in Street of Davao City.

Fueling hope in Mindanao

PETRON CORP. AND THE UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INTERnational Development (USAID) will build 120 new classrooms and rehabilitate 400 more in conflict-torn areas in Mindanao. Each will provide $1.25 million for a total of $12.5 million.

The project is part of Petron's Fuel Hope in Helping Filipino Children and Youth Overcome Poverty through Education. United States Ambassador to the Philippines Kristie A. Kenney and Petron chair and chief executive officer Nicasio I. Alvarez signed the Cooperative Partnership Education Endowment by Ramon C. Bacani attended the ceremony.

Rather Petron and USAID partnered in Education Quality and Access for Learning and Livelihood Skills. Petron also participated in the Education, Livelihood and Skills Alliance.

In Tulong Aral program needs more than 6,000 underprivileged youths in Metro Manila and Mindanao through elementary school. The company also built 21 schools to complement the program.

EDUCATION SECRETARY Jesli Lapus tours Barangay Secretary Eduardo G. Dela, second to the Bajada Teachers' Camp. Estela, represented President Macapagal-Arroyo during the camp's centenary celebration. With them is Assistant Secretary Jonathan Malaya, head of the task force for the camp's rehabilitation.

The ace up Payatas' sleeve

From page F1

ball commissioner of the chosen school but the whole community. Alumni did not bring any huge cash, only the time, effort and dedication of Ateneo staff and volunteers.

Modest initiative

But the three-year pilot project SSPELD (Secured Support for Public Elementary Education), modest compared to big-ticket, high profile interventions, had large goals.

It worked from Ateneo's first attempts at reaching out to the poor communities. Some of all, I, Ateneo raised to put into action initiatives that would turn the dreams of Ateneo de Manila University president Fr. Bienvenido F. Nebres Jr. into a reality.

"Nebres's role in development is not only running an excellent school but helping other schools become excellent, too. Gloria says, we will become a family network of excellence with very little impact in the larger scale," Nebres said.

Gerardo C. Ortiz, the current head managing director, said Nebres who sought to develop excellence in leadership and service.

Through the goal seemed like a pipe dream and the country had modest resources, Ateneo focused on four issues: teacher training and development, management development for schools, research and development, and curriculum. In addition to the four issues, Ateneo also set up a development.

But Gerardo Gerardo Ortiz said it made a dent to the huge problem of raising the quality of public elementary education.

Candelaria said the program could make schools "self-sufficient," or experts the excellent Sandoval school, at a time. And the selection of participants had hard to coordinate. At times, were chosen by division superintendents, from the were often nominated instead of those who could have made a more significant impact on the school, and though they were expected to be "role" for their colleagues what they learned, the often overburdened teachers just did not have the time and the energy to share their learning.

Holistic approach

With the support of Washington-based Fr. and Alfredo Ortiz, Ateneo decided to adopt a more holistic approach that involved working with an entire school and community through SSPELD.

From Payatas public elementary schools, those at the lower range of socio-economic environment rankings of the Quezon City division, were chosen to try out the idea. Ateneo wanted to get school officials, the community, local school boards, barangays and civic groups committed to one goal—improving the quality of education in the chosen beneficiaries.

Nebres said they chose Payatas because the area was really poor and really big. He said, pointing to a line from the song "New York, New York" "if we can make it anywhere, we can make it everywhere."

The mission set in did not go in with ready-made answers and solutions to whatever problems they encountered. They insisted by doing a scientific analysis of the problem, conducting top hardest data through research and study to help them formulate possible answers. Only but above these the communities and the schools in very concrete terms the critical and severity of the situation.

Armed with the data, the team met with the school and community for the second part of the framework, the preparation of a strategic plan. One, two and the community set the goals as the team realized that "social issues, no matter how well-intentioned and motivated the development, the plan will not succeed".

Nebres said there ought to give what the community and the school actually needed, human development, not infrastructure. The money solved the problem Sandoval school, at a time. And the selection of participants had hard to coordinate. At times

ENTERTAINMENT

Editor Bonnie O. Valuela

IN THIS ISSUE

- Jolens' one-of-a-kind trip Exclusive /H1
- How Sharon Cuneta became a caregiver /G4
- 2 Davids face-off on 'Idol' Viewfinder /G4
- Melanie Marquez has a new 'baby' /G4

BY BOY GEORGE! KC Louie Heredia as the Culture Club's front man in the "Greatest Hits of the '80s" show /H4

7 films in Cinema One finals

By Marinel R. Cruz

A 12-YEAR-OLD BOY'S COMing-of-age story. A tale of drivers and landlords. A childhood drama set in the slums of Davao. A comedy on struggling students. A road trip to Ilocos. A family drama. A romantic movie set in Pangasinan.

These are the films competing in this year's Cinema One Originals Digital Film Festival, which showcases the talents of local independent cinema and encourages the creation of original, full-length films.

Seven films were picked from over 100 manuscripts and concept story lines. Finalists will get P1 million each as grant from Creative Programs Inc., ABS-CBN's cable program network, which also produces the Lifestyle Network and MYX channels.

■ "Boss," Written and directed by Soxedy H. Que, this is a musical melodrama about a gangster and a 12-year-old boy.

■ "Kabanata" takes viewers back to the time when lines and landlords ruled. David Ilili (a mourning scene de force performance that they hope will change history's course. Baybe Lumiala directs.

No theme

■ "Imbensyon" is a childhood drama set in the slums of San Antonio, Davao. At the helm is Sherad Anthony Sanchez, whose previous Cinema One film, "Hating Bahaan ng Bahi," has won in film festivals abroad.

■ "Ligaya." Director Roman Carlo Olivares' first venture, this teen comedy with the tagline "Iro-ond mga kuwento ng Salome, Dedicato, at Shaded Circles," is about the different characters that shape the Main University.

■ "Motorcycle." Karlo de Guzman writes and Jon Red directs this family drama of a son's motorcycle ride to Ilocos, on his father's instructions. The main character's encounters run in reverse, slowly uncovering keys to their past.

■ "Tanggawa." Richard Somes' film is a family drama where happy moments are interspersed with bitterness.

■ "Hiraya." A tender tale of love between a sad man and a lonely girl, set in Agno, Pangasinan, the meditation of love and the sea is written by Raymund Gemell C. Cruz. Bob Bryan directs.

Ronald Arguelles, Cinema One director for programming, said this year's festival has no theme, and that the chosen films reflect Cinema One's wide-ranging market.

The week-long festival kicks off Sept. 2.

Email marse@inquirer.com.ph

SHIRLEY'S PETS — BY ROBERT MAGALSON

A. LIPIN — BY JESS ABEGA

TULDOK — BY RAPLH AND TATLONG LAMBING

PUSAO BABOY — BY TIM LUNGOS

DIVINE COMEDY — BY STEVEN PABALINAS

GARFIELD — BY JIM DAVIS

SALAMIN — BY DARWIN PEREZ

BABY BLUES — BY JERRY SCOTT

ATOMO AND WIBBY — BY LIRA GARCELLANO

LOVEKNOTS — BY ELIZABETH CHIONGLO

KIKO MACHINE — BY MARK ARCENA

BEN — BY DANIEL SHELTON

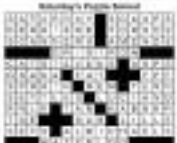
DAILY CROSSWORD

ACROSS
1 Period flicks
5 Cuban night of Hong's 60's
10 "Peanuts" nemesis
14 Adhesion
15 "The face of America" poet
16 Year in Havana
17 Tested on "Jeopardy!"
18 Bay
19 Alternate number
20 Sandbox or basketball
21 Tic-tac-toe loss
22 Actor Hall
23 Actor Hall's daughter's spouse
27 Short Oldsmobile
28 Aardvark's feature
29 Mars or Mueller
30 Terry Gilliam's Time Bandit
31 Commandos
34 Whacky comic
40 Mozart's land
41 Type of classic
42 Hall of Famer Ryan
47 Half "B" player
48 Dress over
49 Jalopy
50 Oberon-offered
51 Comfort
52 Assembly letters
57 Mortar's platters
58 Wizard's brother
59 Actor Wallace
60 Author of books
61 Comedy genres
62 Farewell in Firenze
63 Greek letters
70 Mentholated
71 Cartoonist's product
72 Miniature sea cat
73 Miniature box
74 Formerly, once

DOWN
1 Stately woman
2 Dot, DP, calls
3 Nexus interval
4 Nexus cousin
5 Mess-around
6 Nexus
7 Pokemon
8 Mom's flicks
9 Oberon/Titania
10 Lay-person's promises
11 Concern of Jane and Loraine
12 Parrots' auxiliary wish
13 Mess disorder
14 Lay-person's promises
15 Company with a spokesman
16 Comics of Jane and Loraine
24 Parrots' auxiliary wish
25 Mess disorder
26 Lay-person's promises
32 Company with a spokesman
33 Comics of Jane and Loraine
35 Parrots' auxiliary wish
36 Mess disorder
37 Lay-person's promises
38 Company with a spokesman
39 Comics of Jane and Loraine
43 Parrots' auxiliary wish
44 Mess disorder
45 Lay-person's promises
46 Company with a spokesman
53 Comics of Jane and Loraine
54 Parrots' auxiliary wish
55 Mess disorder
56 Lay-person's promises
64 Company with a spokesman
65 Comics of Jane and Loraine
66 Parrots' auxiliary wish
67 Mess disorder
68 Lay-person's promises
69 Company with a spokesman

By Jacob E. Pankin
Weston CT

Saturday's Puzzle Solved



HOROSCOPE

BY FRANCIS DRAKE

TGIF BORN TODAY People are amused at your antics. Many of you are well-taught, and others are willing to learn something or the unorthodox at least once. You strive to find a balance between freedom and control in your life. You are a dynamic and attractive person. Famous Taurus folk include Mary Tyler Moore, Jackie Gleason, Ernest Hemingway, Ringo Starr, Dolly Parton, Grover Cleveland and Sammy Davis, Jr. Happy birthday to you.

ARIES (March 21 to April 19) Big Co. will make important financial decisions at speed. You could receive hefty. Today's Cell Mates are: cancer, about whom and you.

TAURUS (April 20 to May 20) You in the early Cell Mates that is associate your aspirations with those of a larger situation for rewarding balance between partners and close friends). Expect to be challenged. Don't take this personally.

GEMINI (May 21 to June 20) You might have disagreement about something, or possibly related to a family problem or legal matter. Take things slowly and don't act in a hurry.

CANCER (June 21 to July 22) Anything you do today is in sync with money, so pursue investment or commerce. Be cautious of overspending today. Avoid important decisions about financial matters.

LEO (July 23 to Aug. 22) You feel quite balanced now that you've been and you have confidence in yourself. You can't always talk to this time, and have to consider your responsibilities.

VIRGO (Aug. 23 to Sept. 22) Handle confidential information or plans, educational matters or anything having to do with law, publishing, religion or deep ideas. Travel, go goals? Don't forget to keep your negotiations.

LIBRA (Sept. 23 to Oct. 22) You're a good idea to collaborate with others. Be careful about shared property or anything held jointly with someone else. This includes investments, insurance matters, inheritances and taxes. Postpone this for another day.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23 to Nov. 21) Today is the day to get your finances in order. This is the only Full Moon in your sign all year. Be careful with your financial affairs. Avoid conflict about in the climate outcome of any Full Moon.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22 to Dec. 21) Work done or behind the scenes is favored. Time for networking of ideas. Don't worry about health issues today, and remember things are not really clear.

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22 to Jan. 19) Someone you might disagree with, especially financially, is not going to budge on your view. Be diplomatic as you can. This disagreement is not worth risking the romance or the good relations. Good luck tomorrow.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20 to Feb. 18) Because today don't overreact, especially with authority figures. Be flexible, don't spend 100%. It's easy to jump to the wrong conclusions. Have patience!

PISCES (Feb. 19 to March 20) You're an excellent writer. Be sure to get your ideas down. Travel before you act. Journalists are upset. Nothing is written in stone—motivate.

CONCEPTIS SU DOKU

Conceptis Sudoku

By Dave Green

		3	9		5	1		
	8			6			4	
			4		3			
6		9		7		4		5
	4		1		9		3	
5		7		4		2		1
			7		6			
	6			3			5	
		8	5		1	9		

Difficulty Level ★

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HOW TO PLAY SU DOKU

Fill the grid so that every column, every row and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1 to 9.

Tips and programs at www.sudoku.com

Answers to previous puzzle

4	6	7	2	9	3	8	5	1
1	2	5	7	6	8	4	9	3
8	3	9	1	5	4	2	7	6
3	7	4	8	1	9	6	2	5
6	5	1	4	3	2	9	8	7
9	8	2	6	7	5	3	1	4
5	4	8	3	2	7	1	6	9
2	9	6	5	4	1	7	3	8
7	1	3	9	8	6	5	4	2

'Prison Break' on free TV

Click!

"I've Got Nothing To Wear"

Wentworth Miller (L) and Dominic Purcell

gin Burrows are of the maximum-security facility.

ll Emmy nods

"The Ellen DeGeneres Show," hosted by Emmy award-winning comedian Ellen DeGeneres, has garnered eight nominations in the 35th annual Daytime Emmy Awards, including Outstanding Talk Show/Entertainment and Outstanding Talk Show Host for DeGeneres.

The year's Emmys will be broadcast live on June 20 from the Kodak Theatre in Hollywood.

'Man-Made Marvels'

Discovery Channel explores the story behind the building of the Beijing's National Stadium, also known as the Bird's Nest, for the 2008 Olympics.

The futuristic National Stadium will accommodate over 90,000 spectators for some of the Olympics' most popular events, plus the opening and closing ceremonies.

"Man-Made Marvels: Bird's Nest Stadium" premieres May 25 at 9 p.m., with replays on Monday at midnight, 8 a.m., 2 p.m., Saturday at 2 p.m. and the following Monday at 8 a.m.

'300' on HBO

"300," based on Frank Miller's epic graphic novel of the same title, debuts on HBO on May 25 at 9 p.m.

The movie is a retelling of the ancient Battle of Thermopylae in which King Leonidas (Gerard Butler) and 300 Spartans fought to the death against Persian King Xerxes and his massive invasion army.

Encores on May 26 at 1 p.m., May 29 at 7 p.m., May 31 at 11 a.m. and 11 p.m.

'700 Club Asia'

Tuesday to Saturday mornings starting this week, "The 700 Club Asia" airs following on GMA Life TV. GMA 7's second lifestyle channel.

'I've Got Nothing To Wear'

Discovery Travel & Living presents "I've Got Nothing To Wear," which features stylist and designers who have three days to recycle, reuse and repurpose the clothes already in a client into a fabulous new wardrobe.

It premieres May 24, at 10:30 p.m., which ensures the following Saturday at 3:30 p.m.

SHANG CINEPLEX

1 Speed Racer
2 Iron Man
3 What Happens in Vegas
4 Harold and Kumar 3
Iron Man
Speed Racer

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Ellen, partner jumping at the chance to marry

LOS ANGELES... TALK SHOW HOST ELLEN DeGeneres and longtime girlfriend Portia de Rossi are jumping at the chance to get married. DeGeneres announced their engagement during a taping of "The Ellen DeGeneres Show" on Thursday, telling the studio audience the news that the California Supreme Court had struck down state laws against gay marriage. The show airs Friday in the US.

"Now, for the first time, I am announcing: I am getting married," she said. The studio audience leapt to its feet for a long ovation, and Australian-born actress De Rossi ("Ally McBeal," "Strictly Ballroom") was among them, beaming and clapping. Then DeGeneres added: "Thank you. I'll tell you who the lucky guy is soon."

Ellen DeGeneres and Portia de Rossi announce their engagement during a taping of "The Ellen DeGeneres Show" on Thursday. AP

Far gay rights

The same ruling means same-sex couples could tie the knot in as little as a month. But religious and social conservatives are seeking to put a constitutional amendment on the ballot in November that would nullify the Supreme Court ruling and ban gay marriage.

DeGeneres, 50, has boldly used TV before to make a stand for gay rights. In 1997, the lesbian host character on the ABC sitcom "Ellen" out of the closet, making the show the first on prime-time network TV to have an openly gay lead. It drew shouts from gay civil rights organizations but was condemned by some religious groups.

In a 2005 interview with Allure magazine, the comedian said the limited she and de Rossi are "together in the case of our lives." AP

Far from home, she gets role's essence

By Hazmel R. Cruz

SHARON Cuneta with director Chito Rono, center, and an English actor

"THIS IS THE HARDEST film I've done so far," said award-winning actress Sharon Cuneta about her role as a health worker in London in Chito Rono's newest film, "Caregiver."

It was her turn into a credible domestic worker, Cuneta said (her seven caregiver narratives around to guide her while filming. Over 90 percent of the film was shot in England.

"But what really helped me get to character was the fact that I was so far away from my husband and children. I was able to empathize with Filipinos who left their loved ones to work abroad," Sharon said during a media gathering for the film last week.

The actress said she sought the flu twice during the three weeks she was in the British capital. "I had chills, but I didn't want to park up the shoot, as inherit [a] say," she said. She broke out in awful rashes shortly after the cameras began grinding. "Everybody had cold sores, or skin-ng problems here."

Sharon added: "I just kept reminding myself that the things I did for 11 days were nothing compared to what millions of OFWs [who have been doing] every single day for years."

She plays Sarah Jacobson, an English teacher residing in London in order to give her son [portrayed by John Mendoza] a better future. Backing up Sharon are John Estrada (as her husband Noah), Lotlot de Leon, Jessie Aston Roa, Shin Penaloy, Monique Wilson, Anna Luna, Mickey Perlada, Jhong Hilario and child actor Mikaing Morales.

Think Chito made all of us work hard. Di ko na-feel ang England. We survived on take-out meals. We didn't get to visit any of the landmarks. We just stayed inside the hotel or in our room," Sharon recall.

Major obstacle

She added: "I kept telling myself that I represent the OFWs all over the world, so I had to do justice to my role."

The vacation was a major obstacle, Sharon admitted. "The day would start out very cool then suddenly it would turn dark. Next thing we know, hail would be falling," she recalled. "It was very unpredictable."

Some 30 English actors auditioned for the roles that eventually went to Saul Stockler, Matthew Rutherford and Claire Jones. "For the first time in the history of Philippine cinema, non-Filipino actors are playing key roles in a Filipino film. These parts are essential because they help shape Sarah's character," Sharon explained.

"Caregiver" is also Sharon's first project with Robb Diaz, it marks her 30th anniversary in show biz and 20th year with ABS-CBN. Star Cinema, the Kapamilya network's movie arm, is also celebrating its 15th anniversary this year.

"When this project was first offered to me, I said to myself, God [only] has a way of making things more together at the right time," the actress said.

"Caregiver" will be shown in theaters nationwide starting May 28. A special screening will be held at SM Megamall on May 27 at 7 p.m.

'Duel' of two Davids on AI is a done deal

WELL, IT LOOKS LIKE IDOL FREEDOM last week ago that David Cook and David Archuleta would emerge as "American Idol" last two "Final Finalists" has come to pass.

Who will win the "Idol" crown this week? We've already placed our bet on Cook, but of course Archuleta's many avid fans have a lot to say about that.

Before we focus on the "Final Finals," can we just take a moment to compliment third-placer Jasmine Murcadas on her impressive stint in the course of the AI competition? In case it hadn't, she's the 20th edition's "most improved finalist" award-winner. She looked rather scruffy at the start, but she eventually got her act together.

Tight fight

In last Wednesday's show pumped square-off, she looked really professional and polished in her three shimmering performance outfits. Gone was her "signature" Afro-ish hairstyle, which was replaced by a more sophisticated 'do.

In the process of her gradual transformation, Jasmin has shown that, aside from singing well, she's also a good actress—so, a career in musical theater would be a natural for her, especially now that the pool of male leads has a scarcity.

Finally, now that Jasmin's facial features are no longer upstaged by her frizzy hairstyle, it turns out that she looks quite a lot like Diana Ross. So, if a producer decides to do a stage or film musical about Ross' life, Jasmin would be exactly right for the role!

As for the final "title fight" between Cook and Archuleta, the older David is clearly the more versatile and experienced performer—but, hmm: Almost-Idol #07 has shown his mettle on video, so Archuleta could still emerge as champion, especially if he can back up the "unpredictable youth" vote.

Well, we'll leave it here than to the idol's millions of rabid fanatics—and to the fickle finger of fate, of course. So, let's end those rantations by re-blowing on the entire AI process that's just now hitting its climax:

It's instructive to recall that, only a few months ago, 24 young talents were chosen from ten open tens of thousands, for the singing idol's finals. Not much time has since elapsed, but it's difficult to clearly remember early frontrunners like Jasmine Burgella, Rubbie Enrico, Amy Jean Davis, Asia's Eppersen and Jason Yarger.

Which just goes to show: The perks of "fame" can be fleeting indeed. And, more significantly: You have to get into the UK's Final 12 to get the physical chance to be remembered strongly enough to get a musical career going, even if you don't "survive" much longer in the competition.

By that standard, the likes of Brandy Hermann, Jessica Cuarez, Brooke White, Kristy Lee Cook and Michael Johns may be dinner, but definitely not out.

As Johns' case, he's very definitely a powerful singing act, despite his unexpected ouster. Jason Dale even think he had a good shot at the title, as his departure came much too soon for comfort. Well, other "injures" like Jennifer Hudson and Clay Aiken have bounced back in a big way, so Michael Johns can and thinks it can be even. Dare for Jasmine and Amanda Overmyer, who have under-rated appeal going for them.

As for next Kamikle Malcher, she can also keep her career going—especially if she goes on a post-mortem tours of the Philippines. Which she should do it soon, because some local music fans have a seventeenly short attention span.

HBO standouts

Next month, watch out for three standout viewing prospects on HBO: "All the King's Men" with Sean Penn, Jude Law and Kate Winslet; "Always" with Richard Dreyfuss and Holly Hunter, "Goodfellas" with Robert De Niro, Ray Liotta and Joe Pesci, "Mr. Saint's Holiday" with Rowan Atkinson.

"Flame, Traitor & Assassinator" with Stevie Martin, "Saving Private Ryan" with Tom Hanks, Tom Sizemore, Matt Damon and Edward Burns, "Spider-Man 3" with Tobey Maguire.

"Sweet Magnolias" with Julia Roberts, Sally Field, Dolly Parton and Shirley MacLaine; "Law Street" with Robert De Niro, "The Good Shepherd" with Matt Damon, Angelina Jolie and Alec Baldwin.

VIEWFINDER
Nestor J. Torre

Melanie has a brand-new 'baby'

By Armie Adina

REALITY QUEEN-TURNED-actress Melanie Marquez has a brand-new baby.

The mother of six children, the former international model has found another "child" to take care of.

"It's really just like being a mother," Melanie told Inquirer Entertainment of her new job as chairperson of her church's fellowship committee.

Melanie converted to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints when she married current husband Isaac Lacuesta. The church will mark its 30th anniversary in the Philippines in 2011.

This is not the first time Melanie has offered her services to the church. She has worked in the Relief Society, an organization of Mormon women, for no compensation.

Medical mission

Through the group, the church has embarked on medical missions, notably the blood-saving campaign. "We don't drink, we don't smoke, so we have healthy blood [to donate]," she noted.

The group also funds a hostel in Central College and takes on projects involving genealogy, among other things.

Hands-on

In the recent kick-off ceremonies for the coming Mormon jubilee year, Melanie was hands-on.

She brought pots of porridge out of the pantry and served the cakes. At one point, she lifted a Chinese woman's tray.

During the program, Melanie gave an emotional speech, thanking both members and non-members of the church for their support.

After the short program, the work up a luncheon and door prizes in what a clean-up group in a Makati neighborhood.

Still her own international model look like a mother figure.

ENTERTAINMENT

qbeatfire
Today's Special
Hollywood Style Sushi
Ashlyn Ashlyn Ashlyn

One-of-a-kind trip

By Ayeni Sar Chogo Jr.
ENTERTAINMENT REPORTER

THREE TIMES, JOLINA MAGdangal said, foreigners intoxicated during the (sea-worth ahoy) of "I TALY (I Trust and Love You)" on the cruise ship Costa Magica.

"First was an elderly passenger who had difficulty opening her cabin door," she told business entertainment.

The second instance involved an entire family in an elevator. "I couldn't understand a word they were saying," Third, a crew member thought she was goofing off. "I had to drag him in the set, to show him that we were shooting a movie."

She told director Mark Reyes that, perhaps, she should carry a sign in Italian, saying she's not a celebrity, but an actress. "Carla Abad suggested that I wear a jacket over my collection outfits," she said.

Actually, she wore the new outfits proudly. Prior to the trip, she took a crash course at the Magsaysay Institute of Hospitality and Culinary Arts in Manila. "I wanted to be convincing. Cabin attendants fold bed sheets and fix a room in a particular way."

For the gala night, Jolina and the entire cast blended with the actual crew members in a "farewell show" encountered for passengers.

"Mark (Neyes) joined women in a dance number," Jolina recounted. "Eugene (Domingo) and I performed with cohesions, mostly Filipinos."

She said she learned a lot, chatting with the OFWs. "They shared their life stories with me. Some are homesick, others are excited because they just started working."

One told her that the Filipino-Chinese Magdos became closer because of the shoot. "We got together with them before we left. They were so sweet, cooking adobo and singing for us to cry to often."

But "Venice is definitely the highlight of that trip for Jolina.

"It has always been my dream to ride a gondola," she said, related. "The one I got was special, lined with Italian carpets."

Again, since she was in a wedding gown for that Venice shoot, tourists assumed her to be a real bride. "People on the Rialto Bridge applauded and serenaded me. An Italian girl asked for a snapshot with me."

Jolina says it was her dream come true to ride a gondola in Venice

INQUIRER EXCLUSIVE

Still inconvinced this gondolier, she says. Her father, Jun Magdangal, sent us this snapshot.

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4 IRON MAN
5 POSSESSED
6 SPEED RACER

The family that steals together

Costwise from top: Mischa Dritter, Shannon Woodw

By Oliver M. Palumbarit
Contributor

THE MALLOY CLAN IS PROBABLY ONE OF the strangest TV families you'll ever meet. They're a tight group of con artists trying to pull off their most difficult scam yet in the unique drama, "The Riches."

The weekly series created by Jeremy Lipkin tells of a group of "travelers"... drawn clan have subsisted and existed for generations in America by preying on virtually anyone who lets his guard down.

It's uncommon for TV shows to use these flaw... dubble in shady dealings as protagonists, but this unusual perspective—that of a cheering nomadic family's—is intriguing. We're hooked from the start. More importantly, we root for these people... whom we obviously wouldn't root for in real life.

In "The Riches," the family that steals together... stays together. There's a fascinating dynamic to a group that values mutual respect, while unusually... ling its systematic preying on others.

No violence, though

Moving around in their RV for years, the Malloys have always been unmoved, constantly improvising and sneaking off with other people's money wherever the road leads them. Interestingly, they don't resort to violence.

Fleeing a community of fellow thieves after some serious disagreements, Wayne Malloy (Eddie Izzard), his wife Sabrina (Emmy-nominated Minnie Driver) and their three kids ponder their... mountain future. In an unsung chase, their journeys cause a terrible road mishap that kills a rich couple. Well, make that the "Rich" couple.

The Malloys try to resuscitate Doug and Cheyenne Rich, but fail. They take the deceased's cash, newly bought Louisiana home, and after much debating, they decide to move in and pose as the new neighbors, the Riches.

It's a crazy idea, but surprisingly, it works in a show, "The Riches" works, as: every episode of the first season offers different monthly quandaries that strongly bonds us the familial and individual growth of the Malloys. It's immensely satisfying to see the identity thieves scramble to maintain their cover, learn things they never ex...

5 years from now on Wisteria Lane

DID YOU KNOW...

WASHINGTON—(DOUGLAS... short Read on further if y... don't want to know what h... pens to some of the ... characters on "Desper... Housewives."

Marcia Cross, who p... domestic goddess Bree on... ABC comedy-drama, told ... Radio that a flash-forw... narrative device will sh... viewers a glimpse five y... into the future of the lives ... the Wisteria Lane gang.

Cross said her characte... notice "a big leap."

"She's gone over into ... world, and she's become a ... of a narrator," the 46-year-... actress said.

When asked if that meant ... has anything to do with ... covering business Bree start... with her neighbor Rachel... Elkan Delanyl, Cross repli... "It does have to do with ... business. Bree ultimately ... made a name for herself."

And Bree—the epitome ... of preppy style—... change her look.

"Let's put it this way ... Don't flip her dyed and ... happy about that," Cross ... ed.

She also revealed that ... Longoria-Parker's character ... Gabrielle, "has had ... children."

When asked what became ... of the troublesome Kit... Hatfield Jr.), who is ... Cross said, "the highest ... ne of worry or is highest ... ne of love."

Neal Fisher, Eddie Izzard and Aidan Mitchell

posted, and in Wayne put it, "steal the American Dream!"

But it's not solely about deception, half the time, those are crucial tricks that this new life reveals to them. The origin and consequences of Dublin's secret drug addiction are creatively tackled, while Wayne's compulsion for seemingly unconquerable challenges is consistently presented.

Amusingly their kids...brooding teen Carl (Noel Fisher)...musically inclined DANI (Shannon Marie Woodward), and cross-dressing Sam (Aidan Mitchell)...have assimilated into "normal" life quickly, without letting go of their real personalities and special skills.

While sessions are rife with either smart humor or serious drama, the narrow escapes are hokey or too contrived intentionally, most especially when Izzard's character whips up pep talks that don't really make sense. These often manage to make him sound supreme—even sexy etc—to his new coworkers. But these don't always work.

Despite this, you believe that this family is struggling really hard to adapt and blend in, and again it can relate with them, you'd easily enjoy watching this unconventional unit squirm through their unending channels.

"The Riches" airs every Tuesday at 9 p.m. on 2nd Avenue.

Nikki's book finds

"WE WERE TRAINED TO LOVE BOOKS at home," says TV host-actress-singer Nikki Gil, the latest celebrity bibliophile to join the Get Caught Reading Campaign of the National Book Development Board.

NGRD's books range from early childhood favorites like the Newbery Medal books and Sweet Valley classics like Virginia Woolf's "To The Lighthouse" and Samuel Beckett's "Endgame" to contemporary bestsellers such as Lazos Izquierdo's "Like Water for Chocolate."

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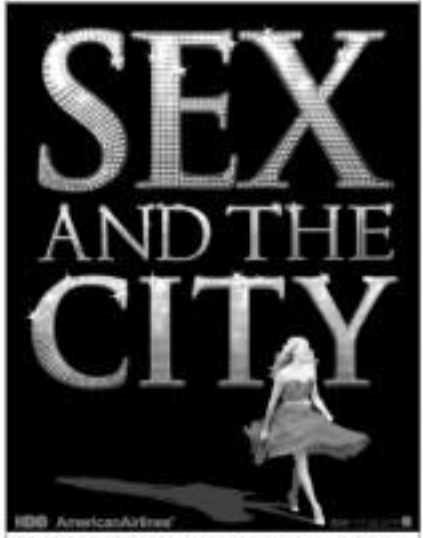

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GMA3 Pueblo takes his special moment with the audience.

Encore saves revival show

By Pachabi Concepcion
Photos by Rudy Esparza

IT HAD ALL THE ELEments of a made-for-TV special—production numbers, costume changes, scripted spiels—but one that stretched a bit too long with so many names and segments crammed in.

Reminiscent, the cleverly crafted concert aimed everything and spanned the course of the season's theme.

In the Mode Maestro last Friday, the first of the two-night show dubbed "Greatest Hits of the '80s" featuring Louie Heredia, Raymond Lauchengco, Gino Padilla and Randy Santiago tried to relive a decade with songs that swayed between upbeat R&B and an abundance of English OPM that tended to get mushy, with lots of British and American rave wave hits thrown in for good measure.

Opening with Lionel Richie's "All Night Long" and El Debarge's "Rhythm of the Night," the four singers tried to keep up with the songs' bouncy beats, but with Padilla's mushy sounding tenor and Heredia having difficulty finding his dance groove.

Script failure

On the third number, "Dancing in the Street," one of the show's faults became apparent—a failure of the script to mention that this song first came out in 1964, originally recorded by the Motown girl group Martha and the Vandellas (curiously, version by Mick Jagger and David Bowie in '85).

Another classic Motown tune, "You Can't Hurry Love" by The Supremes circa 'late, didn't get the proper credit, even if the four headliners were apparently interpreting the '82 Phil Collins version.

A succession of ballads that paid tribute to women singers Amy Allen, Jed Lauzon, Jaya Morales, Hope Fernandez, Jessie Flores, Sharon Cuneta and Kuh Ledesma were instantly applauded, although this was also the portion where the theatrics of Santiago's singing voice became noticeable.

An attempt to end the show countdown with Zia Zee Padilla's "Manhooloh" sounded strange, with crude vocalists sounding here like, for instance, "Hawag akong hapunan ..."

Among the spot numbers that came out fine were Heredia's "Sing Along Song"—his voice still sounding like the original recording; Padilla's signature song "Ooo Ahh ... Ang Kiliti Kiliti" and "Let the Love Begin" duet with Rachelle Ann Go; and the latter, as a special guest, belting out Barbra Streisand's "Memory" with power and workhorse; while her false body was resurrected on the each stillness.

The next segment was a blast. It highlighted the featured performers' strong abilities as Lauchengco rearranged elements in Menudo's Robby Rosa and singing "I Need to Lose Him," Padilla as Michael Jackson in "Beat It," Heredia as Culture Club's Boy George in "Karma Chameleon" and Santiago as Prince in "Let's Go Crazy."

Humor, spoof

It was easy to appreciate the humor in these numbers, but sadly they were done as a spoofing reason that downplayed the songs' brilliance in their heyday. Santiago was the funniest, exaggerating how he put socks in his crotch to avoid the embarrassing flexiness of his purple costume.

Of the four, Lauchengco was the best-appointed to the segment that spotlighted their past hits as OPM balladeers; it could be that, aside from his theatre-trained pipes, his songs' lyrics, though not exactly awesome, were devoid of boring ("I may be miles away/But love is where my heart will stay").

There were spotty, nonsensical patches like the vapid sound-track themes and solo numbers, set to monster simple spiels that Padilla and Heredia dabbled.

It was also a pity that nobody informed a couple of male dancers that the T-shirts they were flaunting had been of the band 60s, which were so prominent in the '70s.

Dance time

But entirely was prepared for an encore that encapsulated, partially at least, the happy, sensitive, quirky, simple, but rocking appeal of '80s music. Everyone stood up and danced to a succession of wonderful stuff including those by General Public, Yaz, Yahoo, The Cure, Depeche Mode, Billy Joel, A-ha, The Go-Gos, Billy Idol and Jefferson Starship, from which one phone spoiled the kind of sound that caused a music "We built this city on rock 'n' roll."

Well, never mind if there were no Clash (release "London Calling" album was widely considered as the best album of 1980), no Simple Splendorous, "Dancing in the Dark" to add to the many "dancing" titles that night, no Blondie ("Call Me" could've ruined Heredia line since he did a mean falsetto in A-ha's "Take on Me"), no Police, no U2 and so on. Maybe next time, if we are to believe fanzine gossip, that the presence of Alan Caccuris, rumors to bring the act to Pinoy communities overseas.

As a whole, the gig was fun and lived up to what one of the guests described it: like a high school reunion. In which case, the host fraternity this each of them was one of those the class most/greatest if unchanged, tough guy (Heredia), clung queers (Heredia) and down (Santiago).

If the latter wasn't exactly an excellent singer, at least he wore really great-looking jeans and boots.

(Above, from right) Gino Padilla, Raymond Lauchengco, Randy Santiago and Louie Heredia. At left, Louie's turn with the crowd.